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Applying Assessment Principles during Emergency Remote Teaching: Challenges and Considerations

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Received: 4/8/2021 Accepted: 10/4/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
One of the main challenges higher educational institutions encounter amid the recent COVID-19 crisis is transferring assessment approaches from the traditional face-to-face form to the online Emergency Remote Teaching approach. A set of language assessment principles, practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback, which can be applied to any academic subject, are critical within the design of any task that aims to assess learning. This review paper discusses how assessment approaches need to be modified in a time of crisis. It determines the position assessment should adopt within emergency remote teaching methods and analyzes the fundamental characteristics of five principles of assessment and how they can be accomplished with emergency remote teaching approaches. Furthermore, this paper evaluates the vulnerability and viability of the five assessment principles, examines the application of online assessment on a holistic level, and puts forward a set of recommendations to ensure the assessment principles are achieved within emergency remote learning contexts. The paper concludes with the notion that the construct of time, which is inherent within the principle of practicality, is the most significant when developing online assessments as it is this characteristic that is the most at risk. In addition, we suggest that the assessments that are implemented during emergency remote learning involve open-ended, as opposed to close-ended, questions and highlight the importance of educators demonstrating flexibility and understanding toward their students.

Keywords: assessment principles, COVID-19 crisis, emergency remote teaching, formative assessment, summative assessment

Introduction
During the ongoing global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the education sector in most countries has had to suspend or transform educational programs. Many governments have made the tough but necessary choice to suspend face-to-face learning and substitute it with online learning for higher education institutions to safeguard students’ and teachers’ health (Cahapy, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Huang, Tlili, Chang, Zhang, Nascimbeni, & Burgos, 2020). Consequently, and where feasible, educators have turned en masse to online teaching to cause the least disruption possible. For example, due to the pandemic, Australian universities have turned to online learning (Reedy, Pfitzner, Rook, & Ellis, 2021). Similar responses have been observed in Saudi Arabia (Alqabbani, Almuwais, Benajiba, & Almoayad, 2020), Jordan (Al-Salman & d Haider, 2021), Oman (Guangul, Suhail, Khalit, & Khidhir, 2020), China (Huang et al., 2020; Zhang, Wang, Yang, & Wang, 2020), and various other nations including Germany, the United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia (Crawford et al., 2020). Plans approved by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, for example, have led to the implementation of initiatives aimed at ensuring that online Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Blackboard, can reach as many students as possible (MOE, 2020).

There is nothing new about online teaching in itself: Many educators were already making substantial use of online learning resources before the pandemic started. What has caused concern is the unprecedented rapidity and extent of the transformation from face-to-face to remote modes, especially for those who had never given, or received, an online lesson before the current crisis. In this situation, Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, and Bond (2020) have coined the term Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to describe a temporary change in how learning experiences are delivered in response to a crisis. It often involves remote teaching and learning as opposed to face-to-face classroom instruction. The instructional delivery is typically returned to the initial mode after the crisis has come to an end.

ERT differs from standard ‘online learning’ in that it does not necessarily aim to recreate the structured educational environment of the classroom but, rather, to ensure a rapid and reliable means for students to gain the necessary temporary access to educators should an emergency occur (Hodges et al., 2020). The educational goal of ERT is to guarantee that course materials are made available to all students who need them and that the latter continue to receive all the pedagogical support necessary to carry on learning throughout the emergency. Hence, the onus under ERT is on educators, and the priority is on delivering information. As teachers, and the management of higher education institutions, have likely been obliged to switch to online teaching (whether synchronous or asynchronous) rather than chosen to make the change, it is probable that they have had insufficient time to prepare specific materials. Instead, they may well simply be reworking existing material designed for classroom use, including assessment measures.

Hodges et al. (2020) suggest that under ERT, the role of assessment is less prominent than during regular times. They stress that all actors in the learning process, including students, educators, parents, and carers, are likely to be living through a time of profound disruption and, therefore, may set aside their everyday priorities, including an insistence on the need to study. Consequently, ERT places less emphasis on checking whether students have achieved learning.
outcomes and more on the speed with which organizers ensure that all the necessary resources are in place and operational (Hodges et al., 2020).

The events that unfolded in educational settings in the aftermath of the onset of COVID-19 represented one of the worst global interruptions to education in the 21st century. As such, there is very little prior research that has attempted to delineate the implementation of assessment principles when learning experiences are shifted abruptly from face-to-face to online contexts. Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, no prior studies have put forward an emergency plan that can be followed to ensure a smooth transition to ensure assessment standards are upheld during times of crises. Therefore, this study aimed to elucidate on what assessment constructions need to be considered during emergency situations. It examines methods of navigating and ensuring assessment principles in a manner that ensures equitability for all students while also encouraging instructors to take into consideration the factors that ensure instruction continues and learning outcomes are evaluated without putting the factor of assessment at risk.

The current paper investigates the place of assessment within ERT. It is organized as follows: Firstly, the principles of traditional assessment are analyzed; following that, the operation of these principles under ERT is examined. Then, we explain online assessment in the wider context. Lastly, and in light of the discussion presented in the third section, we provide recommendations for using assessment measures within ERT.

**Literature Review**

*Principles of Assessment and their Implementation within Emergency Remote Teaching*

Given the technology now available to support remote learning and teaching, it might seem a simple matter to transfer modes of assessment from the classroom into the online environment. However, a closer investigation is necessary to ascertain whether assessment in the classroom is, in fact, both suitable and transferable to the context of online tuition, particularly ERT. As such, this study bridges the existing gaps in understanding by delineating a set of assessment principles and the factors that should be taken into consideration when educational institutions shift to online assessment in emergency situations. This section, therefore, presents Brown and Abeywickrama’s (2010) assessment principles and examines how they aligned with assessment measures adopted under ERT.

Brown and Abeywickrama’s (2010) focus was on the best way to structure educational assessments in language learning. They devised a series of assessment principles, namely practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback. Nonetheless, they also stated that these principles “apply to assessments of all kinds” (p.25). This is evidenced in multiple publications on assessment principles in education, including McAlpine (2002) and McMillan (2000).

The first of Brown and Abeywickrama’s (2010) principles, practicality, requires an assessment to meet specific criteria, namely that it is cost-efficient, inexpensive, and should be marked within a reasonable amount of time through using a specific scoring process or rubric. Furthermore, an assessment does not need an unreasonable amount of time for either the student to complete or the teacher to mark. In addition, a test should not be difficult to administer (for example, any external equipment required, such as audio-visual devices, should be available and
in working order). Within the principle of practicality, then, it seems Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) particularly stress the value of time, suggesting that this criterion predominates over the other evaluation factors.

In transferring all five of Brown and Abeywickrama’s (2010) principles from the classroom to an online context, it is the principle of practicality that suffers the most. Firstly, regarding the equipment necessary for students to complete the test under ERT and because of the shift to online learning, every student must have access to a computer or laptop, as well as good internet connectivity. This is not the case for all students, and whereas in regular times, students who do not have their computer might visit their university library and use a computer there, under ERT, this avenue is closed to them. Students who do not have their own means to access an online test are therefore at a gross disadvantage; hence, testing in an online setting, in this case, is impractical. Moreover, we cannot assume that all educational institutions in all countries have access to LMSs, such as Blackboard. Not only will institutions that do not have such resources have to find the funds to buy them and the personnel to install them, but doing so will take time which, under ERT, is lacking. Hence, their students will be at a disadvantage because their tests will be suspended or reduced until these resources are in place.

As noted above, the critical important element of the principle of practicality is time, and under ERT, there may simply be too little of it to create or recreate appropriate tests. Even in the best of cases, teachers will have to rework some elements of tests, such as classroom quizzes, to make them suitable for the new environment. In the worst of cases, they will have to change the nature of the assessments completely; for example, if students were going to be assessed by carrying out a laboratory experiment, under ERT, they might have to fill in a sheet of multiple-choice questions (MCQs).

The last element within the principle of practicality that has a bearing on assessment within ERT is the feasibility of transferring the scoring rubric or another evaluation process from the classroom to an online setting. For example, certain institutions have decided to replace end-of-term or midterm assessments with continuous assessment, simultaneously devising how to translate a scoring system developed for the first type (percentages, grades, pass/fail, etc.) to the second type. Discussion is ongoing as to the implications of making this type of change. For example, how does this change affect future employers or graduate admissions departments’ understanding of the new types of assessment, and how can they compare between a class graduating under one system and classes which graduated under a different one as they consider accepting new applicants into their institutions.

The second principle enumerated by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) to assess the construction of tests is reliability. For Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), a test is considered reliable if it meets two criteria: consistency and dependability. Thus, if the same test is taken on different occasions by the same or similar students, they will gain the same or similar grades. The factors contributing to the potential failure to meet the reliability criterion can be classified as student-related, rater-related, and test-related. Student-related reliability refers to the emotional or physical state of a student taking the assessment (e.g., feeling ill or suffering psychological problems such as anxiety). Rater reliability refers to the possibility that scoring is subject to human error in the form of the graders’ inexperience, subjectivity, bias, or failure to
pay attention to the scoring criteria, as well as the possibility of disturbance in the examination hall, for example, from the noise outside. While test administration reliability affects the administration of specific assessments, rather than the test itself, test reliability refers to flaws in the construction of the assessment. For example, it could be very long, thus exhausting students, or it is required to be done within too short a time, thus pressurizing students. In worst cases, a test could include poorly written items that confuse students. All of these eventualities could negatively affect grades.

In the ERT context, too, test reliability can be undermined by several factors. As for student-related reliability, learners who are unfamiliar with online learning are likely to feel anxious when they are suddenly asked to take a test or assessment online, especially given the circumstances that have made this transfer necessary (i.e., ERT). At the same time, however, it is possible to strengthen assessment administration reliability under ERT, as students are less likely to suffer the anxiety which accompanies the experience of being in an examination hall. Instead, they may feel more relaxed and engaged taking an exam in their own homes, comfortably dressed, able to make a drink and visit the bathroom when they wish. Nonetheless, assessment administration reliability can also be undermined, given that in ERT, and within the broader context of online learning generally, it is far more difficult to prevent cheating. For example, there is no guarantee that the name on the assessment belongs to the person who sat it or that they did not consult their notes, books, and search engines during the test period. Hence, it is challenging to gain a clear view of whether a student has achieved the set learning outcomes. To partly circumvent this problem, teachers can use a setting under which students only see one question at a time and cannot go back to previous questions to change their answers. Alternatively, they might require students to answer within a set period, for example, 15 seconds, after which they are timed out and have to move on to the next question.

Although these measures may prevent cheating, they can have a counterproductive effect by increasing anxiety and stress levels or forcing students to choose an answer too quickly, thus making student performance unreliable for different reasons. This is particularly true for learners who are unused to online tuition and testing and who expect the less rigid norms of a classroom assessment. Finally, test administration reliability under ERT may frequently encounter technical challenges, among both teachers and students, that can impede the smooth running of an examination and even require IT professionals to provide assistance. This could cause disruption, adds stress to students, and impacts their grades.

Brown and Abeywickrama’s (2010) third principle, which is arguably both the most important and the most complex of the five assessment principles, is that of validity. For a test to meet the validity criterion, it must precisely measure the skill or information it sets out to measure. Within language education, Brown and Abeywickrama’s (2010) particular field, a writing test which sets out to investigate whether students can put together an argumentative essay in their second language must assess them on that ability, rather than, for example, testing whether they can translate vocabulary items between languages. The second area of validity refers to the fact that the test must reveal how well the person taking the test has achieved the stated learning objectives. When transferring tests from the classroom to the ERT context, it is essential that teachers must continue to respect the principle of validity. Learning objectives will not change when a curriculum leaves the face-to-face classroom to an online one; hence, the tests...
accompany them into the new online format must continue to measure effectively whether students achieve those objectives. The principal concern under ERT is how teachers can assess via online tests whether and to what extent students have achieved the learning outcomes required for them to graduate. One major issue with assessment alignments with the intended learning objectives is how well these objectives are communicated and taught online. Whether all students receive the same exposure or amount of learning they need to achieve a specific learning outcome is integral to assess how valid an online assessment is.

One can argue that disadvantaged students who have problems accessing their classes either because of financial constraints or lack access to a good network or device receive less training on the intended learning outcomes. Therefore, the validity of online assessments that measure specific learning outcomes is compromised by the inequity of students’ exposure to these learning outcomes. As a result, many institutions have made recording online classes a must during ERT. Thus, if means are devised to change the assessment format without changing its fundamental focus on a particular outcome or set of outcomes, the validity of a test held under ERT should not be compromised.

Authenticity, Brown and Abeywickrama’s (2010) fourth principle of assessment, is a measure of the extent to which test items reflect real-life instances which students use to interpret and demonstrate their knowledge. This is perhaps the most difficult of all the principles to maintain, particularly within the ERT context and in most online testing contexts. Providing authentic test items requires consideration of several factors, which include grasping which skill or knowledge the teacher is seeking to test for; ensuring that the information embedded in the test item is realistic and relatable; and, finally, judging how to present information within the test.

To implement the principle of authenticity within ERT, the information given in online test items must continue to meet all these standards. In some cases, this is relatively simple: For example, when asking students to read a text which depicts a realistic scenario and answer MCQs to demonstrate their understanding, authenticity is as easy to achieve in a test administered online as one distributed in the classroom. However, if students are taught to carry out some physical operation, such as using a laboratory tool, in the classroom, but then required to demonstrate their grasp of the technique under ERT, difficulties arise. They may not have the device or, if they do, the assessor may not be able to get a good view of how they manipulate it. In these circumstances, the assessment will cease to be authentic.

Finally, Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) consider ‘washback’, the effect exerted by any given test on how curricula are designed and taught, and what learning behaviors are expected from. According them, “a test that provides beneficial washback positively influences what [and] how teachers teach and positively influences what and how learners learn” (p.38). It also provides feedback that induces learning improvement. It should also allow for teacher feedback so students can enhance their learning (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). However, washback is considered more formative than summative because the latter is limited to a letter grade ‘feedback’ as opposed to detailed feedback that a student can build on. For washback to be beneficial, interaction between the teacher and students is needed. Hence, to achieve this principle under ERT, student and teacher interaction is necessary during and after an assessment. As such, it is crucial to identify ways to ensure that such an interaction exists. One plausible
solution is to encourage individual and whole-class discussions after each online assessment. One-to-one discussions between a teacher and a student can generate individual feedback that learner could use to understand what they need to improve. The whole class feedback discussion enhances learner understanding and acknowledgment of needs improving. While it can be time-consuming to deliver feedback of this nature, it reflects what a teacher would do in a traditional face-to-face mode. Finding the suitable platform for such interactions and feedback negotiation might be another challenge that can be eliminated by providing the right LMS and proper training for teachers and students on various technologies that allow smooth and easy one-to-one and whole-class interaction.

Clearly, there is an interplay among all these factors when assessment is recreated under ERT: For example, teachers under the pressure of time (the principal construct within practicality) to ensure that students are taught the entire curriculum after the delay imposed by the onset of the ERT may find that tests which are hastily composed to save time and get results in by a predetermined date do not meet the principles of validity and washback. Equally, not all these five assessment principles have to be recreated entirely in ERT; failing to comply with certain constructs completely will not weaken an assessment as much as the failure to completely comply with others, as further discussed below.

In the university context in Saudi Arabia, there has been concern that implementing online assessment so suddenly could sacrifice one or more of the above-mentioned principles and endanger students' performance by failing to assess their learning accurately. Furthermore, due to an inability to provide students with a fair opportunity and the required technologies and amid efforts to prevent the risk of contracting the coronavirus, the Ministry of Education took the decision that all students would be permitted to progress to the next level and that the grades from the first semester would also be held for the second semester. Furthermore, the Ministry also decreed that their grades would not be taken into consideration in their final GPAs (SPA, 2020). Although this plan may be far from ideal, it was deemed appropriate given the time pressure, need to come up with a decision whether to conduct high-stakes exams, the requirement to take infrastructure limitations into account, and the risk of further spread of the virus. Consequently, it may be that under ERT, priority must be given to ensuring that courses continue to be delivered, with testing and assessment relegated to a position of secondary importance, as was the case during the first wave of the pandemic in April 2020 in Saudi Arabia (SPA, 2020). The section below investigates this argument in more detail by discussing the standard approaches to assessment of online tuition. After that, recommendations are made for the implementation or modification of these standard approaches to fit the context of ERT.

**Assessment in Online Learning Settings**

The essential aim of any assessment of learning, either face-to-face or remote, is to check whether, and to what extent, a student has achieved predetermined learning outcomes. Educational institutions in the 21st century are seeking ways to understand which outcomes are appropriate to a constantly changing globalized and digital world and devise ways to deliver their educational programs accordingly (Jerald, 2009; Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, & Terry, 2013). Consequently, these institutions must also understand and develop new means or modify old ones to evaluate these new outcomes and pedagogical approaches (Boitshwarelo et al., 2017). Several scholars have examined how online testing is used by educators and the relative
advantages and disadvantages of their methods, while others have proposed new or revised models for online assessment.

Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) find that designers creating tests intended for online use select only certain types of test items, such as those that require a closed-ended response from students, which has the added advantage of making the creation process more manageable. Boitshwarelo et al. (2017) also find that online tests tend to ask MCQs alongside other computer-friendly question types, such as true/false, pairing, and preset short answers. Although we do not recommend that test creators should stick entirely within these confines, as other types of assessment are possible, even online, the sort of tests described by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) and Boitshwarelo et al. (2017) do have the advantage that teachers can quickly and easily create them, and they can be easily scored and administered to students.

As for the five assessment principles discussed in the previous section, in our view, practicality is not only the most important, but also the one which is most vulnerable to compromise during the transfer from traditional assessment to online assessment. As noted above, the principle of practicality encompasses the constructs of time and cost-effectiveness; as concerns the latter, the risk is that equal opportunity will not be afforded to all students undertaking online tuition or testing because some do not have access to the necessary equipment, such as computer and a good internet connection; hence, they may incur considerable expense in obtaining the necessary resources when university and public libraries are not available. This is even more the case in the context of ERT. If teachers are aware that their students do lack these technologies, they will be in the difficult position of being unable to administer tests or of having to find alternative means to include this group of disadvantaged students. Given the central importance of practicality, if this principle cannot be adhered to, it is of little use adhering to any of the others as if not all students can participate, then testing is, in effect, rendered meaningless.

Gipps (2005) and Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, and Jones (2010) argue that online assessment can, in fact, offer advantages over face-to-face assessment: In terms of efficiency, both the assessment and the marking and feedback processes can be carried out more quickly and reliably, especially where large groups of learners are involved. Moreover, as Pifia (2013) points out, the need for manual input is eliminated when an LMS is used, reducing the time taken to generate tests and decreasing the likelihood of marker bias. However, previous studies on cheating have found that cheating can occur during online examinations because exam administrators cannot check whether students are looking up answers or conferring with each other via social networking apps, for example (Arnold, 2016; Harmon, Lambrinos, & Buffolino, 2010; Varble, 2014). Multiple studies have found that cheating is as likely to occur online as it is in face-to-face contexts (Grijalva, Nowell, & Kerkvliet, 2006; Burrus, McGoldrick, & Schuhmann, 2007; Watson & Sottile, 2010). In light of this, academic dishonesty has been highlighted and described as a significant concern during ERT (Guangul et al., 2020). Some researchers regard the following points as more serious disadvantages that may entail online testing is only suitable for assessing lower levels of understanding (McAllister & Guidice, 2012); the format offers little flexibility for educators who are seeking to test students of different needs, backgrounds, and levels (Stupans, 2006); and test creators may find themselves overly dependent on the lists of standard MCQs drawn up by educational publishers (Masters, Hulsmeyer, Pike,
Leichty, Miller, & Verst, 2001). In normal circumstances and with the current affordances and advances of technology, we would probably disagree with the first and second arguments because technology allows for a myriad of both testing methods and mediums that are suitable for different types of learners (for example, special needs learners can take online tests that have certain features such as audio clips that read aloud the choices and questions) while allowing for the creation of examinations and test items of all levels of difficulty. For example, computer-adaptive testing in high-stakes testing changes the difficulty of test items presented to the test taker depending on how well they perform on the test (see Chalhoub–Devile & Deville, 1999). However, because of the push to immediately shift to ERT, teachers might create tests in a rush in which both the level of difficulty and accessibility for different types of learners are compromised. In addition, teachers might succumb to incorporate previously published questions to relieve any stress and ensure they meet assessment deadlines.

The two basic types of test assessment are formative and summative. Of these, Meyen, Aust, Bui, and Isaacson (2002) and Boitshwarelo et al. (2017) suggest the first is more appropriate in the online context, in which they argue assessment of achievement should be an integral and continuous part of the teaching process. Moreover, it offers the most opportunity for feedback. However, Sewell, Firth, and Colvin (2010) find that both forms of assessment are appropriate and feasible for online learning. The former type aims more to provide an opportunity for feedback than to grade students’ progress and to enable teachers to see how far students have progressed towards achieving the necessary outcomes (Sewell et al., 2010). Creators of formative tests can choose from a variety of formats according to their aim. For example, if an educator is seeking to evaluate affective learning, then classroom surveys and discussions will allow them to gauge the values, beliefs, reflectivity, and other affective attributes of the students, as well as gain feedback to improve the testing process itself. Formal summative assessments, on the other hand, are of value at the end of programs to check the progress made towards learning objectives, for example via graded examinations, essays, or quizzes. These assessments are usually regarded with greater trepidation by students because they offer a single chance to achieve a high grade. Hence, if an exam grade represents 20% upwards of an entire course grade, it is extremely vital to protect the integrity of administrators and students by carrying out the examination under the supervision of a proctor (Sewell et al., 2010). However, Black and Wiliam (2009) prefer not to make such distinctions between the two forms of assessment as summative assessments can be used as formative when the purposes of the latter are appropriately employed.

It seems that dealing with formative assessment under normal situations and ERT might be easier for both teachers and students since interaction exists amongst them while the assessment is being conducted. However, summative assessment during ERT should be approached with more caution. Students should not be disadvantaged due to the sudden move to online assessment. Offering training interventions on the format and instructions associated with summative assessments can be effective. In fact, some schools do provide their students with mock exams in the normal situation, if time allows, so adopting this type of approach to support the ERT is deemed more appropriate. Another plausible and more advisable method would be assessing students using multiple timed summative assessments rather than relying on one midterm exam and a further final exam with a 50% grade weight for each. Timed lengthy exams
might need advanced proctoring equipment on the side of both educational institutions and students, and that would be rather daunting money-wise.

Taking advantage of the various affordances of advanced technology in conducting different performance-based assessments is viable. Live presentations or speaking tests could be performed via video conferencing, for example. This will be further discussed in the following section.

Discussion

Any discussion of assessment within ERT must be prefaced by a discussion of how assessment can be implemented within the wider context of online learning. However, despite a recent surge of interest in remote learning, particularly within higher education, little research has been carried out into how learning outcomes and student performance can be assessed in this context (Kim, Smith, & Maeng, 2015). Moreover, there is a lack of clarity around which methods are best applied to assessing the skills and knowledge required more generally for digital literacy and employment in a digitally-driven workplace (Boitshwarelo, Reedy, & Billany, 2017). Perhaps due to the paucity of research, national governments, as well as the educational profession, have recently taken up the search for appropriate means of preparing students for life in the digital age, and evaluating their progress toward readiness to join a workforce characterised by uncertainty and change (Gupta & Ndahi, 2002; Kinash et al., 2015).

In this pandemic and given the particular lack of research into how online education can continue in emergency circumstances, educators have turned to technology to continue delivering their courses with the minimum delay and disruption. However, having done so, we find ourselves challenged by the need to devise new strategies of assessment in order to ensure that all our students, including those who do not have access to technologies, continue to achieve the necessary learning outcomes, so they all have an equal opportunity to progress to the next stage of their education or into the workforce (Cahapay, 2020).

Different studies adopted different approaches to the study of assessment in online learning. Some focused on academic integrity and whether it is compromised in the online learning, proctoring options (See Reedy et al., 2021), student achievement in the online mode as opposed to the traditional mode and students perceptions of online assessment (See Igaz, Afacan, 2020). While such studies provide insights on the gains of shifting online, its costs, place and time benefits as compared to traditional examinations, they fail to address the quality of the assessments used in the online mode and or ERT in terms of the widely-accepted assessment principles. Validity, reliability, washback, authenticity and practicality should be given a priority in assessment research as they represent the pillars of assessment design and evaluation whether in the traditional setting or the online and ERT mode.

Considerations to Consider for Implementing Online Assessments in ERT

The argument in the previous section enables us to consider the feasibility of carrying out summative and formative assessments in an ERT context. As noted in the first section of this paper, the construct of time is particularly vulnerable in this context, given that an emergency, by its very nature, requires a sudden and relatively unplanned shift from one mode of action to another - in this case, classroom to online learning. In these circumstances, educators are
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Attempting to translate planned assessments from one medium to another. Certainly, it is more feasible to modify existing assessments to fit the new environment than to begin the process of creating entirely new ones, as doing so will minimize delay in delivering teaching programs and alleviate stress for both students and educators. This last point is of particular importance given that stress levels will probably be higher than normal anyway due to the emergency, and that the overarching objective is to safeguard wellbeing and ensure the earliest continuation of education. Hence, going ahead with planned assessments such as multiple-choice exams, final projects, dissertations, papers, or presentations is recommended, alongside the use of online discussion boards and email consultations to provide a method of communication which, if a little ‘rough and ready’, will nonetheless allow formative assessment to continue.

Alternatively, educators could dispense entirely with the heavily weighed final summative assessment normally used at the end of a course. Given, as discussed above, that some students cannot access the necessary technology, it cannot be assumed that all students will be able to sit certain types of exams while ERT continues. Furthermore, there is no way in such conditions to implement the recommendation made by Sewell et al. (2010), that all such high-stakes examinations should be proctored. Instead, the one-off summative examination could be broken down into several components, such as quizzes, with the final grade being the sum of the grades for each component and the marking rubric adjusted accordingly.

Whatever assessment plan is formulated to deal with the conditions of ERT, it is essential that students must be kept informed, so they are not taken aback by a change in format, and that they have the time to prepare themselves, gather the necessary equipment, and make any arrangements, for example ensuring they will not be disturbed. Significantly, educators should not consider ERT as an opportunity to become overly creative around how they carry out an assessment: Students need as much continuity as possible, so adding new assessments, or creating several new types of assessment, is not advised.

When it comes to ERT and academic dishonesty, we first need to ask: What role and what form does academic integrity play? To answer this question, it is necessary for us to investigate how digital environments affect academic integrity. Reedy et al. (2021) state that it is crucial to maintain academic integrity through a

[r]econceptualization of digital exams and assessment that are fit for purpose in a digital age. This requires thoughtful and innovative assessment design and deployment, aligned to a teaching and learning approach to academic integrity […] and a move away from outdated approaches to academic integrity that are not effective when translated to online contexts. (pp. 20-21)

It is important to note that adequately addressing academic integrity is not limited to employing technology, such as E-proctoring software. According to Stockwell (2020), technological tools do not represent a satisfactory solution to cheating during high-stakes examinations in invigilated online environments. Instead, developing exams that consist of test items developed by faculty could significantly reduce academic dishonesty by creating test items that are unique and authentic. However, Reedy et al. (2021) highlight how it can be very difficult to deter students from cheating during online tests if they have already developed an intention to cheat. Stockwell
(2020) emphasizes that, despite the technologies that have been developed to prevent students from cheating, they consistently find methods of overcoming the underlying mechanisms.

Parnther (2020) suggests that, specifically in the context of ERT, we consider the real meaning of academic integrity in relation to what ERT is doing to students in order to rethink what academic integrity is. For instance, there is a need to consider how the pandemic and the sudden switch to online learning have impacted students’ concerns and anxieties. Parnther (2020) asserts that learning extends beyond preparing for examinations because it involves considering students’ requirements outside the academic environment, for example, providing them with the skills they need to find a job. It is crucial these factors are taken into consideration to adequately address the factors that may lead to academic dishonesty. As Parnther suggests, it is essential to re-evaluate courses and learning outcomes, as well as effectively communicate with students during ERT and explain what is expected of them. The approach described here may be compassionate toward students, but it still does not address how academic integrity can be achieved during online assessment. Undoubtedly, external factors beyond the educational environment can impact how students perform and may motivate them to violate academic integrity standards; however, academic integrity represents a critical aspect of education and cannot be sacrificed, even during a difficult period such as ERT. As a result, it might be useless to move forward with the learning/teaching process since teachers would not be aware of their students’ performance, hence jeopardizing their chances of achieving their goals. To address this issue, we need to educate students on the critical nature of academic integrity. Reedy et al. (2021) found that students who perceived academic integrity to be of critical importance were significantly less likely to cheat, regardless of the ease with which they could potentially bend the rules.

A final advice or consideration for designing assessments during ERT is that educators must remember to show understanding and flexibility, whatever type of assessment they decide to implement during ERT. In these exceptional circumstances, educators must demonstrate that they trust their students and accept that the justification offered by a student to explain, for example, a missed deadline or a low grade, is probably the truth, given the impossibility of proving otherwise. It is important to bear in mind that not all students have the technological means at home to keep up with their learning or participate in online group activities and may well ask to be given a second chance. Undoubtedly, this adds to the teacher’s workload because she then has not only to create a second assessment, but also administer and mark it. To preclude this possibility, we recommend that teachers, where possible, set assignments based on open-ended, rather than closed-ended, questions, while ensuring that similar elements and difficulty levels are included that were present in the main assessment and aligning that with the learning objectives to ensure equality and equal opportunity for all students. An example could be setting a question which requires students to write an argumentative essay, which can be completed in their own time. However, this solution is not appropriate for certain subjects, such as assessing knowledge of math or grammar.

Conclusion
The aim of this study was to examine how assessment principles can be put in place and determined in emergency situations in which learning experiences are shifted from face-to-face to online modalities. It also reviewed some of the factors educators should take into
consideration when developing assessment methods. The above discussion suggests that the construct of time was one of the most at-risk factors when implementing assessments during crises due to the unpredictability of the events that unfold. As such, educators need to adopt a flexible approach to assessment and be open-minded in terms of the options that are pursued; for instance, multiple-choice questions or writing a final paper.

As we delve into the different approaches of assessment and methods of achieving assessment principles (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010) under ERT, it is worth considering what decisions different educational institutions have taken in terms of assessment during ERT. In addition, questions of how and/or to what extent those decisions affected the various assessment principles and what teachers and students have learned from, and thought about, assessment during ERT are worth investigating. Future research should also consider the various strategies that transform paper-and-pencil assessments into online or computer-based assessment under ERT. A final learning point from the ERT experience is that it has proven to many educators, including those who were not keen on online teaching or had not considered such an approach, that teaching via this mean could be beneficial. In fact, there is a broad consensus that education may never return to the form in which it took prior to the pandemic (Zhu & Liu, 2020), and that technology will be increasingly employed in combination with face-to-face approaches via an integrated approach (Bellini, Pengel, Potena, Segantini, & ESOT, 2021; Goh & Sanders, 2020). It is necessary to recognize that the shift to online learning during ERT might have been temporary, but technology is still imperative to education, even though it cannot be relied upon exclusively. In addition, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on education, requiring that we consider possible development opportunities concerning the provision of open, free, and accessible resources to all students. Consequently, a special focus should be placed on developing digital solutions that facilitate the development of relevant content, effective teaching techniques, and learning environments that are supportive, in addition to ensuring that teachers are appropriately qualified and prepared.

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Digital Platforms in the Emergency Remote Education: the Students' Preferences

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Received: 8/18/2021 Accepted: 10/4/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
One positive side of the Covid-19 pandemic is the unprecedented opportunity it has offered to the Higher Education Institutions to experience digital learning like never before. During the pandemic, Distant Learning platforms, including Learning Management Systems and Video Conferencing Platforms, have been ubiquitous, and no single institution survived without them during the pandemic. Hence, one of the critical lessons that should be learned is the students' experiences with these platforms. This study aims to investigate the digital platform preferences of English major students in the College of Language and Translation at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia during the Emergency Remote Education due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Its significance lies in the fact that it underscores and addresses students' needs and preferences with regard to the digital platforms to be used for language learning, a pragmatic examination of which has been carried out in the following pages. It focuses on reasons for the preferences of the two leading digital platforms used in King Saud University: Blackboard and Zoom. A Survey with open-ended and closed-ended questions was designed to answer the questions of the study: which digital platforms do students prefer to use during Emergency Remote Education, and what were the reasons behind students' preferences? A total of 300 students from both male and female campuses at different levels of study participated in the study. The results showed that students preferred the Zoom to Blackboard. Reasons of preferences were mainly the ease of use, followed by supporting smartphones, then having an app for smartphones. The thematic analysis of the open-ended question showed that technical problems and connection latency were the main reasons behind students' preferences of the Zoom. The findings also indicated gender differences in reasons of preferences.

Keywords: Blackboard, digital platforms, Covid 19, emergency remote education, Higher Education Institutions, learning management system, video conferencing platform, Zoom platform

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.2
Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declaration of Covid-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, has brought unprecedented experiences to different sectors and people worldwide (WHO, 2020). In education, and for the first time in history, millions of students, teachers, and administrators all over the globe faced the fact that they cannot meet physically and need to be all online or at a distance to do what they used to do physically or at school, colleges, or universities. In Saudi Arabia, all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) switched to distance or online on March 8, 2020 (Saudi Press Agency 2020), and the number of students affected by this order reached 1,620,491 based on UNESCO statistics on January 24, 2021 (UNESCO, 2021). All these institutions explored their assets in digital learning, namely their learning management systems (LMSs) and other possibilities to meet this Emergency Remote Education (ERE).

Blackboard was dominant at all these colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia (El Zawaidy, 2014; Aldiab, et al., 2019). The introduction of LMS, namely Blackboard, in Saudi public universities went back to 2006. King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah was the first Saudi public university to have Blackboard, then all other public universities followed (Aldiab et al., 2019). However, Blackboard has never moved beyond fashion, at least at King Saud University (KSU). The LMS never be a part of the curricula in almost all departments because of the absence of policies advocating colleges and departments to use it or utilize it in any manner. The shock was that Blackboard did not meet the ERE needs, particularly the synchronized meeting, due to different reasons. Among these reasons was the bandwidth, network latency, especially for users in remote areas, in addition to the lack of skills in using it by faculty and students, having the fact the Blackboard needs some training to use and it is not easy to use (Kasim & Khalid, 2016). Besides the uncertainty of when the pandemic is over, this fact frantically forced KSU and other public universities in Saudi Arabia to find other solutions. One of the solutions was to have other platforms besides working on fixing the issues of Blackboard. KSU adopted different digital platforms to execute ERE: Zoom, MS Teams, and Cisco Webex. All these platforms were available to all faculty members and staff at KSU in March 2020. Interestingly, all these platforms are mainly web-based synchronous video conferencing platforms with some tools and are not actual LMS like Blackboard. KSU and other Saudi public universities indubitably faced challenges regarding holding synchronous virtual classrooms, and their only available LMS failed to meet the need.

The Blackboard and synchronous video conferencing platforms have been used in KSU in ERE until the writing of this paper in the spring semester of 2021. The rationale of the research comes from its focusing on students' experiences during that pandemic. The significance of the study is that understanding these experiences, particularly the learners' preferences of these digital platforms and the reasons behind their preferences, would help all stakeholders to invest better in digital learning and making further better decisions. In addition, it fosters student-centered approaches in digital learning and transformation. Therefore, the goal of this study is to investigate these digital platforms. It first explores the students' preferences of all digital platforms used at COLT in KSU during ERE and reveals the reasons behind these preferences. Hence the research questions of this study are:

1. What is the digital platform that English majored students at COLT in KSU prefer during Emergency Remote Learning (ERL)?
2. What are the reasons behind students' preferences for a platform?

This present research aims to gain insight into the preferences of platforms and reasons behind the preferences of English major students at the College of Languages and Translation in King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, during the ERE. The research also investigates gender differences in platform preferences and the reasons behind them.

Literature Review

Learning Management Systems vs. Video Conferencing Platforms

Technology has been in language learning since the 1950s (Alshammari, 2007). Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been the main field that refers to technology usage in language learning. However, during the pandemic, LMS, namely Blackboard and Video Conferencing Platforms (VCPs), have been dominant, at least in the context of this study. LMS is a centralized web-based software that manages learning content, student activities, interaction, employs assessment tools, and supports learning processes (Stone & Zheng, 2014; Kasim & Khalid, 2016). Asiri (2012) defined LMS as a web-based technology to assist in planning, distribution, and evaluation of learning. LMSs are not new to HEIs, and they have been in HEIs since they first emerged in the 1990s. Dahlstrom, Brooks, and Bichsel (2014) stated that LMSs today are ubiquitous, with 99% of higher education schools and colleges reporting they have one, mainly Blackboard.

For the past two years, more or less, the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic has constantly been disrupting everyday life in all its spheres. Education is one area that has seen an enormous transformation in this context. A significant change in teaching methodology has been affected at the primary and secondary levels. At the college level and in the Higher Education Institutions, course teachers were required to create and utilize a new teaching approach to cater to their higher education institutions' needs in real-time (Johnson et al., 2020). They had to shift from long-established and blended teaching methodologies to a completely computer-generated and remote lecture series. Nonetheless, this sudden change to fully online, synchronous course delivery was not a natural occurrence. Teachers and educators were obliged to employ online learning technologies to revive and resume their course instructions. (Fitter et al., 2020). Camilleri & Camilleri (2021) examined the students' opinions on online learning through asynchronous learning management systems (LMS) and via synchronous video conferencing technologies like Google Meet, Microsoft Teams or Zoom, among others. They collected their data from a sample of 501 higher education students. A survey questionnaire was given to them. And after analyzing students' responses, they discovered that students had a very positive attitude in its favor, and they agreed to utilize remote learning technologies. They had realized the importance of continuing ongoing, collaborative learning with their teachers through synchronous technologies like video conferencing to make use of the two-way communication with their instructors and with their peers in real-time.

Ratnawati & Nurhsanah (2021) examined language learners' perception, preferences, and justifications for using learning platforms, tools, and activities in the context of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). The research findings point out that students positively responded to using Google Classroom Zoom Cloud Meeting. The researchers used a selective or subjective sampling technique and examined 25 third-year English language students at a university in
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West Java. Collecting data through mixed questionnaires, classroom observations, and online interviews, researchers analyzed the responses and concluded that both platforms are effective and acceptable in the online atmosphere for ERT. In their findings on the efficacy of distant learning tools and their preferences by the language learners, Ratnawati & Nurhsanah (2021) expected other researchers and educators to employ them in classroom activities with analogous backgrounds and problems.

Raza et al (2021) believed that as student's competence in learning improved, they would be inspired to attain their study objectives by employing the LMS technology, particularly as the pandemic had socially isolated them. Hence, the advantage of using LMS would make them flexible in the future as well. Overall, there is a need for bettering the LMS proficiency to "increase its Behavioral Intention among students" (Raza et al, p.183). VCPs, on the other hand, are web-based platforms that enable users or groups to meet in real-time. They were mainly designed for business and have proven useful in educational settings, particularly in synchronous classrooms (Amin & Sundari, 2020). For example, in the early month of March 2020, the download of VCPs reached 62 million (Singh & Awasthi, 2020).

Interestingly, many may believe that VCPs are new to educational settings. VCPs have been used in education for more than 50 years (Roth, Pierce & Brewer, 2020), although at minimum levels before the pandemic. Sidpra et al. (2020) stated that the VCPs had been an educational tool in medical education since the 1960s, namely for surgical operations, trauma, and post-operative patient follow-ups. They gave the example of open-heart surgery in Texas in 1962 and viewed by medical practitioners in Geneva.

Many studies worldwide addressed the use of VCPs in HEIs and found that the VCPs proved effective in ERE during the pandemic (Mobo, 2021; Mpungose, 2021; Wlodarczyk, et al, 2020; Medic, 2021; Hilburg, et al, 2020). Hilburg et al. (2020) listed several features that VCPs offer education (see Table one).

Table 1. Features VCPs offer for education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Screen share</td>
<td>Allows either the meeting host or participants to share their device screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with other participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
<td>The host/participant can create a white canvas seen by all participants. It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>can be used to draw with various colors, pens, or text. Drawings can be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>saved at the end of the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polling</td>
<td>The host can write 255 character multiple-choice questions (single or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>multiple answers) with ten choices that can be shared with the group. Each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poll can be launched/cleared as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakout rooms</td>
<td>The host can separate the group into smaller groups for a specific time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>before reconvening as a larger group. Each group can communicate with</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the host to ask them to join their group to answer questions or discuss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotation</td>
<td>Participants may use the same tools available to draw on the whiteboard to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>annotate on any shared screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat and file share</td>
<td>Similar to instant messaging, participants can share messages with the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>whole group or individual participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonverbal feedback</td>
<td>Participants can communicate with the host using preset reactions (e.g.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes, no, and raise hand).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual background</td>
<td>The user uploads a photo or uses existing images (e.g., outer space) to change their background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording</td>
<td>The session is recorded and stored on either the host's computer or Zoom Cloud account. If screen sharing is used, the screen is recorded with a thumbnail of the speaker in the corner. Chat sessions and an audio transcript of the session are also saved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. Adopted from Hilburg et al. (2020, p. 414-415).

The Zoom has been one of the leading VCPs in ERE and proved to be successful in education as it has been in business. A statistic on the Zoom daily meeting participants by Dean (2021) showed that the number of daily participants on the Zoom platforms jumped from 10 million users on December 31, 2019, to 300 million on April 21, 2020. Currently, Zoom has 467,100 business customers and hosts over 3.3 trillion meeting minutes every year and more than 45 billion minutes of webinars (Dean, 2021).

In language learning, Zoom's features help English teachers make notes on their shared screen and get their lessons recorded on Cloud, which makes teaching attractive and interactive. They can also invite assignments on-screen, save them and assess them later to determine their students' strengths and weaknesses. Students can also reflect on their work and progress. Teachers can also show their lessons to other teachers to receive their feedback.

Zoom's screen sharing can give English teachers a great opportunity to develop medical students' intercultural skills by sharing engaging materials such as videos and articles, and presentations. Educators could also ask students to reflect on their lessons by recording a video and sharing it. (Guzacheva, 2020, p.458).

The Zoom platform has been and can be greatly helpful to EFL teachers and students alike in these many ways. In this way, Zoom has been very helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic in allowing English learners, teachers, and academic institutions easy and unfettered access to its multiple features through which academic teaching can be continued in a virtual classroom.

The post-corona era will not be the same as it was in HEIs. VCPs have penetrated every corner of the education processes and become an essential part of digital learning integration to the curricula, especially the integration of LMS with VCPs. Also, most LMS current providers or future providers would have no success if not having VCP in their systems' tools. Indeed, some LMSs have already integrated VCPs in their systems, namely Skooler® with Microsoft Teams, in addition to other Microsoft 365 tools. TalentLMS® has already integrated Zoom with its tools. Colleges and universities in the post-corona time would like to have one platform that includes both the features of LMSs and VCPs instead of what has been taking place in ERE.

**Blackboard and Zoom in ERE**

Several studies investigated the use of Blackboard and Zoom during the pandemic. Dahmash (2020) has discussed 12 EFL students' experiences at KSU with Blackboard and found that they faced different problems: difficulty getting into their classes, sound interruptions, and
incompatible devices. Almekhlafy (2020) studied 228 EFL students using Blackboard at the preparatory year program at Najran University in the South of Saudi Arabia and found positive perceptions. Khafaga (2021) investigated 311 English major students' attitudes toward Blackboard Collaborate-based Instruction in five Saudi universities and found they had positive attitudes toward it. Alhadreti (2020) examined 187 faculty members' perceptions of Blackboard usability at Umm Al-Qura University in the West of Saudi Arabia and found that the platform had inadequate usability during the pandemic. Alghammas (2020) examined the perceptions of 171 English faculty members' perceptions at different Saudi Universities toward the applications of online assessment through Blackboard and found that both men and women faculty members held positive feelings. At Taif University in the west of Saudi Arabia, Al-Salamat, Al-sowat, and Al-roqi (2020) investigated 804 male and female students at different colleges about the effectiveness of Blackboard during the ERE, and the results showed it had great effectiveness. They also found that male students valued the platform's effectiveness more than their female counterparts, and graduate students were higher than undergraduate ones. In Taibah University at Alula campus in the northwest of Saudi Arabia, Mahyoob (2020) found that 184 EFL learners faced many Blackboard problems during the pandemic. These problems were mainly technical, academic, and communication.

As for the Zoom platform, Alfadda and Mahdi (2021) studied the experiences of 75 EFL students at King Saud University during the ERE and found a strong positive correlation between Zoom and the students' attitudes and behavioral intention. They also found that the student's experience with the Zoom is positively correlated with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) variables. In Algeria, Benmansour (2021) studied Algerian EFL students' motivation toward Zoom in an asynchronous setting and concluded that they were highly motivated. Suadi (2021) used mixed methods to investigate 53 Indonesian EFL learners' perceptions of the Zoom at one of the Indonesian universities and found that they held positive perceptions. Participants also stated that the Zoom was effective and efficient in time, expense, and place and agreed that it helped them enhance their language skills and reduced their shyness when participating. Erito (2021) addressed 80 graduate English major students' perceptions of Zoom use in Indonesia. The results showed that students considered it a valuable tool in facilitating their classes, presentations, and communication. She also found that students held positive perceptions toward the use of the platform during the ERE. Another study in Indonesia by Helda and Zaim (2021) discussed the effectiveness of using Zoom in micro-teaching classes by 34 learners studying Indonesian language and literature, and they found that although the Zoom was less effective in micro-teaching lectures, it proved to be an effective online tool in ERE during the pandemic. Li, et al. (2021) stated that they developed six fundamental innovative teaching mechanisms and procedures in their teaching of pair programming via Zoom. These teaching mechanisms and procedures are the 1) effectively managing teaching resources, 2) strategically planning a course, 3) enhancing faculty responsiveness, 4) mandating online faculty training, 5) selecting reliable technology, and 6) accommodating learning disability students. They also stated they acquired valuable experience promoting active, engaging, and problem-based learning activities in a cloud environment. The research findings led by Allen and Seaman (2017) have found in Zoom a crucial technology that encourages collaborative teaching and pair work and allows learners to participate in the learning atmosphere through and learn together and independently. Students can see and listen to other students and record their responses.
However, few studies have compared LMSs and VCPs in ERE. In Saudi Arabia, Al Shammari (2021) compared different LMS and VCPs platforms in Saudi Arabia and found that students preferred Zoom (53.3%) to Blackboard (44.3). Interestingly, male students chose Zoom (67.6%) over Blackboard (29.7), whereas female students were for Blackboard (58.7%) against Zoom (40%). In comparing 340 medical students' preferences toward four platforms used in ERE, namely Blackboard, Zoom, Hangout, and Microsoft Teams, Ibrahim et al. (2021) found the Blackboard with 48.2% and Zoom with 47.1% were the preferable platforms by students in King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, few studies discussed the students' preferences of the platforms used in ERE in language learning in Saudi Arabia. Understanding these reasons would greatly help the inevitable integrations of digital learning into the curricula, mainly in choosing the platform that most satisfies students and fosters their education during or after the pandemic or any situation that may hinder face-to-face classes like weather conditions, wars, or any other ecological crises. HEIs policymakers need to benefit from the ERE experiences in their decisions on digital transformation in their institutions.

Methods

Design

The study aimed to find out English majored students' preferences of platforms and causes behind their references. The study also statistically explored any gender differences in these variables; the platforms were the dependent variables of the research, whereas gender was the independent one. For answering the questions of the study, an online survey was designed using Google forms. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were applied to answer the two questions of the study.

Participants and Setting

All participants were undergraduate English major students with different levels of study. The simple random sampling technique was used in the study. The survey was distributed to all English major students at different levels and campuses through their university email addresses and WhatsApp accounts. The total number of students who voluntarily participated in the study is 324: 174 male students and 150 female students from different study levels. A randomly selected sample was taken from male participants to equal the female participants to answer the study's research questions. Hence, the total number of participants in this study is 300 male and female students, after excluding 17 male participants to equal the female participants. Table one shows the structure of the respondents.

Table 2. Structure of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Selected Sample</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage to Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1318</td>
<td>22.8% (to the total population)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The selected sample of male participants represented 29.1% of the total population of undergraduate English major students N=516. In contrast, the female participants represented 18.7% out of 802 English major students at the undergraduate level at the Women's Campus in the spring semester of the year 2021.

The study was held at the College of Language and Translation at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in January 2021, in the spring semester. COLT gives undergraduate and graduate degrees in different modern languages. The undergraduate degrees are English, French, Spanish, German, Russian, Turkish, Japanese, Chinese, Farsi, and Hebrew. The graduate degrees are English and French. All these degrees are available for male students at the Men's campus. Only three undergraduate programs are offered at the Women's campus: English, French, and Chinese. Graduate programs are offered on both campuses. This study was limited to undergraduate English major male and female students on both campuses.

**Research Instruments**

To achieve the objective of this paper, a survey was designed to answer its two questions. It consisted of three parts. The first part addressed the demographic data, specifically, the gender and age of participants. The second part of the survey was on participant's self-evaluation of computer skills and the possession of devices: namely smartphones, laptops, tablets, and desktops. The last part of the survey was on the preferences of platforms and the reasons behind the preferences. Six reasons were given to choose where participants could select more than one reason. These reasons were:

1. Ease of use
2. Supporting smartphones
3. Security and Privacy
4. Having an application for smartphones and tablets.
5. Integrations with other applications
6. Having other features rather than synchronous virtual classes

An open-ended question for causes of the preference of the platforms was available and optional.

The survey was then posted online through Google forms. All data in this study were collected electronically. Before distributing the survey, it was piloted to several students to ensure the clearance of the questions. The survey was published from January 20, 2020, until January 31, 2021. SPSS software was used to process the quantitative data, whereas thematic analysis was used in the open-ended question of the study. Most responses were collected in the first three days of the distribution.

**Results**

**Platforms and Preferences**

The survey asked participants to state their computer skills before answering the platform preferences and reasons behind their preference. The majority of them noted that they have average computer skills, (40%), followed by those who believed they have advanced skills in
computer (34%), then those who have very advanced skills (24%) and finally a percentage of 2% stated they possess weak computer skills. Figure one shows the participants' computer skills.

*Figure 1. Participants' computer skills*

The survey also asked students to tell the devices they used most in ERE. The findings showed that laptops were the most used devices with 50%, followed by smartphones with 27%, then came desktop computers with 14%, and finally tablets with 10%. Figure two represents the most used in ERE.

*Figure 2. Devices used by participants in ERE*

For the first question of the study concerning the platforms preferred by students in ERL, the results indicated that Zoom was the most preferred platform with 57.6% by all participants, followed by Blackboard with 40.6% and finally came other platforms with 1.6%. Figure three shows the findings of the most preferred platforms.
Regarding the gender differences in preference of platforms, the data analysis also indicated that female students preferred Zoom most with 66%, followed by Blackboard with 32%. As for their male counterparts, Zoom and Blackboard were equal with 49.3% each.

**Reasons for preferences**

*Quantitative Analysis*

The statistical analysis of the survey showed that all participants stated that ease of use of the platform was the most important reason behind their preferences with 30%. The results showed that the platform supporting of smartphones was the second reason behind students' preferences with 20%, then came platform offering apps for smartphones and tablets (18%), followed by the other features that platforms have in addition to synchronous virtual classes (14%), then platforms security and privacy (13%), and finally the platform integration with other applications (6%). Figure four represents the findings of students' reasons behind their platform preferences.
As for the gender differences for preferring platforms, there was no difference regarding the first two reasons: the platform ease of use and platform supporting smartphones. The platform ease of use came first for women students with 31% and 29% for men participants. The platform supporting smartphones came with 18% as the second reason of preferences of women students and with 22% for their men counterparts.

The research findings showed a gender difference in the ranking of the third reason for preferences. Besides synchronous virtual classrooms, the platform's other features were the third reason for female students' preferences (16%). In contrast, the platform with an application for smartphones and tablets came third of the reasons for male participants' preferences (20%). The same is with the fourth reason for choices. The platform's security and privacy came fourth in preferences for male students (13%) while having an application for smartphones and tablets came as the fourth reason for female students' preferences (15%). Female participants put security and privacy of the platform as the fifth reason for their preferences (13%), whereas platform's features besides synchronous virtual classroom were for male students (11%).

There were no gender differences in the last reason: platform integrations with other applications. Men students came with 5% and women with 6%. Figure five shows the male participants' reasons for platform preferences, and figure six reveals their female peers.

![Figure 5. Men students' reasons for platform preferences](image)

![Figure 6. Women students' reasons for platform preferences](image)
Thematic Analysis

Using thematic analysis was to analyze and generate knowledge from the open-ended question in the survey that asked students to list reasons behind favoring a platform over another. The six-step process of Braun and Clarke (2006) was adapted. A sum of 63 students answered the optional open-ended question regarding their reason for preferring one platform to the other: 20 favored Blackboard, 42 chose the Zoom, and one student stated that his preferences are based on the device he used in the ERE.

The analysis results showed that participants who favored Blackboard came under one theme: It is an LMS. One student said, "Blackboard is a platform designed mainly for teaching and learning, whereas other platforms are not." Another participant stated, "On Blackboard, I can see the homework and my teachers' feedback. In addition, knowing my grades". One of the 20 participants said, "Everything is there on the Blackboard, and all are registered and documented; my courses, attendance, grades, and my files." "No need for links to meet, all I need is my student info and password to join my classes" another student added.

Those participants' answers to the open-ended question who preferred the Zoom came under two themes: technical problems and connection latency. One of them stated, "I had never had problems entering my classes on the Zoom compared to Blackboard. I faced technical problems entering my class in Blackboard, which cost me some grades." One said, "When there are many students registered in one course, it is challenging to join Blackboard. The Zoom has no such problem at all". As for connection latency, one of the participants noticed, "I can be more focused on Zoom than Blackboard since I have no problem of lagging. It is very light on my computer and connection". Another student added, "Zoom was very flexible with poor internet connections. It is excellent with students with poor and slow connection compared to Blackboard." Only one participant linked his preferences with the device he used in the ERE. He stated, "I favored Blackboard on the desktops and laptops, but Zoom on the smartphone."

Discussion

This research was aimed to discuss the reasons and causes of 300 English language major students' preferences of platforms used during the ERE in COLT at KSU in Saudi Arabia. It compared six different reasons of preferences: 1) ease of use, 2) supporting smartphones, 3) security and privacy, 4) having an application for smartphones and tablets, 5) integrations with other applications, and 6) having other features rather than virtual classes. In addition, it probed other reasons that students might have for their preferring. The study also addressed the gender differences in preferring the platforms and the reasons for the preferences. The study was conducted in the spring semester of 2021 and after students completed almost two semesters using these platforms.

The study findings showed that Zoom came first in students' preferences with 57.6%, and came Blackboard with 40.6%, and last were the other platforms. The results came in line with Al Shammari's (2021) finding and contrary to Ibrahim et al. (2021). As for gender differences in the first question of platform preferences, the results indicated that female students preferred Zoom (66%), followed by Blackboard (32%). On the other hand, male students came with the same Zoom and Blackboard preferences with 49.3% each. These findings came were the opposite of the result of Al Shammari (2021), in which he found that women students chose Blackboard first with 58.7% against Zoom (40%), whereas men students were for Zoom (67.6%) against
Blackboard (29.7%). The results here indicate a real need for one platform that has features of both LMSs and VCPs. Students had to go to one cyber place to attend classes, check grades, see homework, find feedback, communicate with teachers and colleagues, and find all related information. Jumping from one place to another to meet the need for learning during the ERE has dispersed students.

Hence, one lesson of the pandemic for policymakers in HEIs is to move beyond their current LMS that failed to meet the needs during the ERE. They should think of only platforms that have both features of LMS and VCP. In the case of the context of this study, the Blackboard at the KSU failed to meet the needs during the ERE because of the absence of a light synchronous virtual class; otherwise, the KSU would not buy other VCPs, and students would not choose Zoom as the most preferred platform in the ERE. Luckily, technology is one of the most rapidly changed sectors, and mergers and acquisitions are standard practices. Therefore, some new or integrated platforms definitely will evolve, benefiting from the learned lessons of the pandemic.

For reasons behind students' preferences of platforms, the quantitative results of analyses demonstrated that the ease of use, the first reason, was the dominant one with 30% of all participants. The platform supporting smartphones was the second reason behind students' preferences with 20%, then came that a platform has an app for smartphones and tablets with 18%. The fourth was the features that a platform offered besides the synchronous virtual classroom (14%), then was the privacy and security of a platform (13%), and finally came the platform Intergradation with other applications with (6%). The findings here show that both men and women students agreed that ease of use and having an app for smartphones and tablets are the most important reasons to be found in any platforms used in digital learning. Hence, any criteria for future LMS should consider these two conditions. Indeed, one of the reasons for preferring Zoom in ERE and other contexts was its ease of use: all that a person needs to join a synchronous meeting is to click on a link from a desktop, laptop, smartphone, or tablet. In addition, smartphones today are an essential part of students' life and their mobile learning, and no feasibility of any platform without mobile devices supported, mainly smartphones.

There were no differences in the first two reasons of preference for gender differences in the ranks of reasons behind students' preferences. Both women and men students put the platform ease of use as the first reason behind the preference (31% and 29% respectively), followed by the platform supporting smartphones (18% and 22% respectively). However, a gender difference quantitatively existed in the ranks of the other four reasons. Women students brought the features besides synchronous virtual classrooms that a platform has in the third place with 16%, whereas men students put the platform with an application for smartphones and tablets in the third place (20%). The same was with the fourth reason: female students chose the platform having an application for smartphones and tablets as the fourth reason of preference (15%), while male students thought that privacy and security of a platform should be in the fourth place (13%). The fifth reason of preferences also brought a gender difference. Female students believed that privacy and security of a platform came as the fifth reason of choices (13%) compared to male students who put features that a platform offers beside synchronous virtual classroom in the same place with 11%. No gender difference was found in the remaining reason of preferences: integrating a platform with other applications. Both women and men at
COLT put in last place with 6% and 5% respectively. The results here demonstrated other reasons to be considered when selecting "post-coronavirus education platforms". The four reasons for platform preferences, though they vary in their ranks based on the gender of the participants, serve as criteria for platform selections in the future. Policymakers at HEIs should pay heed for these reasons. For example, sharing screens that Zoom offers has become a norm in virtual classes. With this feature, teachers can present what they used to show in a real classroom. Polling is another feature that offers teachers immediate feedback from students during the pandemic and has become essential. The reasons of preferences also tell that platforms with an application for mobile devices: smartphones and tablets are the ones to succeed in education. Realistically, we live in the age of apps, and most of the time we spend using technology, mainly via smartphones for many people, we deal with apps. Participants' considerations of privacy and security of a platform give policymakers a great lesson on this issue. Indeed, reported hacks of the most preferred platform in the study, Zoom, have interrupting several classes worldwide and harassing several students.

The thematic analysis results indicated that most participants who answered the open-ended questions were for Zoom (42 participants), then came Blackboard with 20 participants. Two themes were found in the answers of students preferring Zoom: technical problems and connection latency. They stated that Zoom had fewer technical issues and worked well regardless of the speed of the internet connections, especially in classes with many students. For the participants who preferred Blackboard, the analysis showed that their answers came under one theme: it is an LMS. They believe that Blackboard is an LMS with features that students need and not merely a place to attend a class. However, one student linked the preference of a platform with the devices he used for the ERE. The finding of the thematic analysis showed that a higher percentage of participants were for Zoom. This indicates that Zoom has features that are not available to the Blackboard. Being a new platform to the students that appeared during the first days of the pandemic, students seem highly motivated to use it based on their answers. As for Blackboard, students have experienced it since they joined the university, so half of the participants in the open-ended question of the study were for it. However, the themes of the thematic analysis should be added to the selection criteria of the "post-coronavirus platform." Being light on the connection and system is one of the features that any application seeks to have, let alone an education platform. Even today and after decades of using the Internet, many still have problems with the speed of the Internet worldwide, especially in remote areas like villages, small towns, and the countryside. This is mainly because most Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are for-profit organizations. Remote areas are not attractive for most ISPs unless some public policies push them to serve these areas. Hence, policymakers should put this in mind when deciding on the platforms. The pandemic will foster digital learning, and many courses will be either partially or entirely online.

Conclusion
This research aimed to gain insight into the preferences of platforms and reasons behind the preferences of English major students at the College of Languages and Translation in King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, during the ERE. The research also investigated gender differences in platform preferences and the reasons behind them. The seismic shifts that the Covid-19 crisis made have given HEIs great lessons on digital learning and teaching. Several
lessons should be learned from these lessons. Among them are the insights of students and their experiences with different dimensions.

The finding of this study indicated that Zoom was most prominent. The Blackboard, although being there for years, came second in the preferences. Reasons for the preferences were varied among students. The most substantial reasons for male and female participants were the ease of use, followed by supporting smartphones. Other reasons: features that a platform offers and having an application for smartphones and tablets were the third and fourth reasons based on the gender of the participant. Privacy and security, and integration of the platforms with other platforms were also other reasons participants consider in their preferences of a platform. The thematic analysis of the study showed that technical problems and connections were the issues of preferences of participants favoring Zoom, compared with participants who were for Blackboard because it is an LMS and not only a VCP.

**Recommendations**

All reasons of preferences should be given high importance by HEIs policymakers in digital learning and transformation. In addition, platform providers, especially VCPs, should consider them for their sake to enter the arena of higher educations and work to make them more than VCPs, but a VCP with LMS tools. For the developers of Blackboard, the pandemic has given them a real test of Blackboard in actual settings worldwide. The VCP features should be a vital tool in the LMS or fade, whether Blackboard or any LMS.

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Online Literature Circles in Learning Hamlet among Pre-service Teachers

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Abstract
Literature instruction may serve multiple functions. This case study aimed at investigating the perceptions on the use of online literature circles among 62 first year Teaching English as a Second Language pre-service teachers in a literature course at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. The participants were assigned to read and participate in online literature circles about the play Hamlet by William Shakespeare. Based on cooperative learning, the participants rotated in playing the roles of the Discussion Director, Device Detective, Imaginative Illustrator, Creative Connector, and Passage Picker in each group. Data from a survey were analyzed in descriptive statistics, while data from the role sheets based on the five roles and the online video of 3 literature circle discussions were analyzed thematically. The findings are significant for teacher training institutions and in-service teachers. This study was able to show that online literature circles were perceived as interesting, engaging, challenging, and fun. The participants engaged in different learning processes involving cognitive, affective, and language skills. Though this study identified some challenges, online literature circles have many benefits and are recommended for literature instruction for pre-service teacher training.

Keywords: Online literature circle, pre-service teacher training, roles in literature circles, Shakespeare’s Hamlet

Introduction

Literature has become part of many curricula in different countries. In Malaysia, it has been in the education system to address different purposes and learning outcomes across different levels. In primary school, it is taught as Language Arts and young learners are encouraged to appreciate and demonstrate understanding of English literature. They also learn to do creative works for enjoyment through chants, rhymes, action songs, songs, poems, stories, and graphic novels. At the secondary level, literature is incorporated to nurture skills in responding, analyzing and evaluating a variety of literary genres in English from poetry, graphic novels, short stories, novels, and plays. At the higher education, literature is often offered as a core or elective course to develop and advance content knowledge and thinking skills apart from refining competency in the English language.

While literature has numerous functions in the education system, instructional evolution and developments in Information and Communication Technology have revolutionized its versatility and transformed the way classrooms embrace its teaching and learning. At the tertiary level, literature instruction that prepares pre-service teachers for the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) can serve multiple functions like to instil the passion for reading, build aesthetic appreciation through language, foster higher-order thinking abilities, or nurture personal growth (Greef, Jenkins & Comer, 2021). To provide support for these learners, literature instruction offers not just a platform for exploring and experimenting with different literary genres for the teaching of the English language, but also exposes them to the pedagogical processes that nurture agility and resilience that are vital for developing professional attributes to become future educators (Masry & Alzaanin, 2021). Hence, literature instruction is important to nurture knowledge and different skills (Alamoudi, 2021) involving language, cognitive, affective as well as attributes concerning social, ethics, and passion towards the teaching profession. The strong training ground prepares TESL pre-service teachers to adapt to changes and developments (Nor Pazilah, Hashim & Md Yunus, 2021) to become future teachers.

Although much effort to guarantee the relevance and worth of literature instruction for the training of TESL pre-service teachers has been established, there are bound to be issues that may affect its novel purpose or instructional process. Fundamental issues in reading like engagement, motivation, and confidence may impede or influence the learning outcomes. In the instructional process, issues in monitoring individual improvement or participation may also be potential challenges. Meanwhile, technological advancement and specific events like the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak have inevitably affected the mode of training and delivery (Li, 2018; Dhawan, 2020). The conventional face-to-face classroom practice has moved to the online or face-to-screen platforms (Moorhouse, 2020). The adjustment has instigated other possible challenges. Therefore, it is vital to obtain insights into learners’ perceptions of their experience through the changes in the learning process to advance the recent educational practice and to enlighten current discussions about classroom practices (Bloemert, Paran, Jansen & Grift, 2019) in literature instruction among TESL pre-service teachers. This case study uncovers the perceptions of TESL pre-service teachers on the use of online literature circles for the learning of a Shakespeare’s play, Hamlet. The findings are beneficial for teacher training institutions and in-service teachers. The research questions are:
1. What are the learners’ perceptions of using online literature circles in learning a Shakespeare’s play?
2. What are the challenges faced by the learners in learning a Shakespeare’s play through online literature circles?

3. How do the learners overcome the challenges faced in learning a Shakespeare’s play through online literature circles?

Literature Review

This section discusses general challenges in literature instruction before highlighting literature instruction for teacher training. The section proceeds with discussing the literature circles model based on cooperative learning as the framework for this article (Daniels, 2002).

Classroom practice and research discovered diverse challenges in literature instruction. A common challenge is the conventional teacher-centered approach that gives freedom for instructors to orchestrate instructional process through chalk and talk. Known as the Initiation, Response, and Evaluation (IRE) discourse structure, it supports instructors’ role in modeling the prescribed meaning in literature while giving an opportunity for learners to participate in answering questions about literature (Beach & O’Bien, 2017). It also allows instructors to check if learners read and understand the assigned text. Nurhadi (2017) explained that IRE supports reading comprehension as learners get to respond orally to questions in class discussions which, according to Joni (2019), promotes active participation in the classroom. Nevertheless, it is also criticized for its limitations. While IRE wastes classroom discussion efforts (Alexander, 2018), it also limits personal engagement, aesthetic pleasure, and higher-order thinking processes among learners as meaning makers (Karolides, 2020). This may result in the loss of interest and appreciation for reading literature or restrict exploration into generative thinking processes (Rosenblatt, 1978), which are crucial to safeguard the significance or versatility of literature in any classroom, course, or program of study.

Proponents of student-centered literature instruction like Daniels (2002) and Rosenblatt (1978) recommended allowing learners to explore personal meaning in literary texts, not just the meaning prescribed by instructors. This makes learning meaningful and serves multiple functions for cognitive, affective, and language advancements (Karolides, 2020). Focusing on cognitive advancement, learners get to explore meaning in literature from multiple perspectives involving critical, creative, and imaginative thinking (Noah, 2018). When personal meaning is central, literature enhances affective developments through personal connections and responses in the meaning-making process (Rosenblatt, 1978). In the case of language development by studying the works of Shakespeare, learners may be challenged to understand unknown and unfamiliar language such as words that have shifted in meaning, different syntax order, complex metaphor, and unfamiliar cultural knowledge (Murphy, Culpeper & Gillings, 2020). However, student-centered instruction encourages exploration of personal meaning, which promotes independence and ownership in learning among learners (Ardi, 2017; Dogan, Yildirim, Cermik & Ates, 2020).

An established student-centered model for literature instruction, that has drawn much attention in research and classroom practice, is literature circles. Described as “small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book” (Daniels, 2002, p.2), it promotes the concept of cooperative learning. Literature circles conducted by assigning roles to every member in a group, require learners to read and discuss literary texts according to the roles. The students can play different roles: questioner, connector,
literary luminary, and illustrator (Daniels, 2002). The groups rotate the roles each time they get into a literature circle, and everyone functions as the ‘expert’ and is responsible for guiding the discussion based on the assigned role (Çetinkaya & Topçam, 2019; Dogan et al., 2020). According to Li, Chen, Su and Yue (2021, p. 919), “these individual roles provide students with a clear reason for reading …The fulfillment of each role is often considered as a major contributor to the success of literature circles.” While the roles support in-depth reading and discussion about literature (Çetinkaya & Topçam, 2019), Bales (2021, p. 18) explained that they “encourage readers to interpret texts in different ways and, in combination, lead to a multiple interpretation of a text through the application of a range of cognitive learning styles.”

While cooperative learning is highly effective in making learners learn through group work (Vygotsky, 1978), literature circles show positive effects of interdependence in group work, and the importance of personal responsibility through the roles (Çetinkaya & Topçam, 2019; Novitasari, Rahayu & Suryanto, 2021). In literature circles, each group member has to take charge of a specific aspect of literature and helps the group to observe meaning from the perspective presented through the assigned role. Each member encourages one another to contribute and respond to ideas in the discussion.

Literature circles encourage personal involvement as they nurture autonomy among learners as meaning makers. According to Rosenblatt (1978), learners can take either the “efferent” or “aesthetic” stance in meaning-making. Most classrooms that adopt the IRE discourse structure focus on developing the efferent stance that requires learners to gather and retain information obtained in literature (Sefhedi, Omidire, Ebersöhn, & Murphy, 2020). When this happens, literature instruction is about building structured knowledge. Learners should be given the freedom to adopt the aesthetic stance in literature instruction during meaning-making. It involves engagement of personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes about literature and life (Karolides, 2020). Literature circles offer an avenue to explore both efferent and aesthetic experiences in literature instruction (Li, 2018).

When learners are free to explore personal meaning through different stances in literature circles, it leads to greater motivation in reading and exploring personal sense of experience with literature (Karolides, 2020). When freedom is given to navigate group discussion, learners are empowered to manage their learning (Ardi, 2017), which motivates them to develop favorable attitudes toward literature (Li, 2018). Literature circles create opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful productive discussions that promote intrinsic motivation important for developing reading habits, interests, and positive attitudes towards literature (Dogan et al., 2020).

Moreover, literature circles encompass literacy strategies and skills that promote reflective practices from personal to critical through interaction with others. Reflecting on social experiences according to Masry and Alzaanin (2021, p. 438) should “help inform identity construction positively.” They share responsibility for managing the group discussions by asking, responding, and making judgments through reflection and reasoning (Daniels, 2002). This type of thinking is deep and supports the exploration of higher-order thinking in becoming independent meaning makers. This differs from the IRE literature instruction, where learners are passive receivers of knowledge with little opportunity to explore personal connection, response, or critical reflections about personal experience with literature (Rosenblatt, 1978).
According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction is central for learning as it reinforces and advances different skills and attributes like teamwork, higher-order thinking skills, and language proficiency. Literature circles prepare learners to work in teams to question, reflect, and learn from one another (Noah, 2018). In groups, learners share control over the key aspects of meaning in literature and become active meaning makers through social interactions about literature (Daniels, 2002). The experience gained from building meaning together serves multiple functions and encourages cooperation.

While serving multiple functions for overall educational development, as a student-centered model, its position in pre-service teacher training is just as important. Precisely, incorporating literature circles in TESL pre-service teachers’ programs prepare trainees to effectively use literature to teach and become the platform for the development of holistic future-ready educators (Kaşlıoğlu & Ersin, 2018). Current developments in research on literature circles for pre-service teachers show interesting discoveries.

In a study documented by Dogan et al. (2020), pre-service teachers were found to be engaged as meaning makers when they read and shared their experience in literature circles. The participants were curious and enthusiastic about sharing their thoughts and views in the discussions. Aytan (2018) also found that pre-service teachers perceived literature circles as favorable as they encourage cooperation, solidarity, development of different perspectives, exposure of hidden talents, self-confidence, aesthetic pleasure, vocabulary building, and identification of details in literature.

The fast development in technology and the unprecedented spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, have changed the traditional face-to-face literature circles to follow the new trend in the online mode. In the case of online literature circles, Imamyartha et al. (2021, p. 295) described it as “an apt avenue for teachers to enhance their practices to prepare students for a technological society.” According to Cave (2018), online literature circles are a great way to hold learners accountable for assigned readings. The platform has also developed critical thinking, collaboration, personal connections, differentiation, exposure to different genres, and positive feedback (Cave, 2018). Li (2018) and Combes (2021) also discussed its major benefits in providing more time to think, equal discussion, unconfined space and time, more writing opportunities, and automatic records.

A study conducted by Varga, McGuinn, Naylor, Rimmereide, and Syed (2020) on university learners from Norway, Pakistan and the United Kingdom found that online literature circles stimulated conversations not only with those within the national context but were successful in providing the opportunity for discussions with learners from other contexts. However, they cautioned that instructors need to tailor the roles in literature circles. This is vital to ensure that specific, clear instructions and responsibilities are spelled out for the different roles. The running of the literature circles would safeguard the success and quality in the learning and training of pre-service teachers that transpire through the online literature circle discussions.

Although much research has documented the benefits of implementing literature circles, the adoption of online literature circles among pre-service teachers has yet to receive much attention (Ferdiansyah, Ridho, Sembilan, & Zahro, 2020) and needs further investigation. Research into it
would build confidence and increase chances for the use of literature circles in future classroom practice (Fortune, Horst, Kessler, Tackett & Pennington, 2021). This study supports specifically the development in research investigating the use of online literature circles for the training of TESL pre-service teachers in exploring Hamlet, a Shakespeare’s play.

**Methods**

The study was a mixed-method case study. It was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the pre-service teachers’ perceptions of online literature circles. It was conducted at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

**Participants**

The participants were selected based on purposive sampling among a population of 62 first-year TESL pre-service teachers. The participants were a homogenous group with similar age, language, education, and cultural background. They enrolled for an introductory literature course that was conducted online during the Covid-19 outbreak. They attended the online classes from September 2020 to January 2021 from their hometown.

**Research Instruments**

The data collection method was quantitative through a survey conducted using Google Form. It was distributed to the participants to find out about their perceptions of online literature circles. The qualitative data in the form of specific role sheets were designed and used for the five roles in the online literature circles and the recording of the online literature circle discussion sessions. The five role sheets were assigned specific names and tasks as presented in Table one.

| Table 1. Name and description of the roles used in the online literature circles |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Roles** | **Description** |
| Clever Connector | Find a connection between the text and the world outside. Describe the kind of connection: Text to Self, Text to Text, or Text to World. |
| Discussion Director | Develop a discussion topic / issue / question. It might be about a specific situation, theme, or character in the text. |
| Passage Picker | Choose a section from the text. Describe and state the reason(s) for choosing it. |
| Device Detective | Identify a literary device. Describe what and where the device is in the text. Explain the use of the device and state the reason(s) for choosing it. |
| Imaginative Illustrator | Select a section from the text that can be visualized/imagined. Illustrate / draw a sketch, cartoon, diagram, or any kind of graphic organizer. |

**Research Procedures**

The participants were assigned to read different literary genres that began with short stories and poetry, then to plays. Online literature circles were conducted throughout four months within a semester. For this study, the analysis was conducted on the five online literature circle sessions based on the play Hamlet by William Shakespeare. The play was introduced after the participants were exposed and given enough training for online literature circles. Also, it would be valuable to investigate the participants’ perception of online literature circles based on a canonical text.
As the play has a total of five acts, each session focused on one act and took place consecutively over five weeks. The participants rotated the five different roles in the literature circles in each group for the five acts in the play. Every participant had the opportunity to experience the five different roles throughout the literature circle sessions for the five acts in the play. They had to complete the role sheet that was specifically designed to guide them in reading and preparing for the online literature circle discussion sessions.

Before the implementation of the online literature circles, the students were briefed on the use of the five roles with the accompanying role sheets, and the structure of the online literature circle discussion sessions. All the materials prepared for the literature circles including the literary texts, notes, and links to instructional videos or secondary resources were shared through the e-learning platform. The participants joined the literature circle discussion sessions through the Learning Management System (LMS) used by the university. They recorded their online literature circle discussion sessions and shared the videos with the class through Telegram. They also shared their role sheets through Padlet. This was done specifically for the purpose to share and extend the participants’ learning experience in exploring meaning. At the end of the fifth session, a survey was administered through Google Form to reach out to all 62 participants.

The quantitative data from the survey on TESL pre-service teachers’ perceptions of online literature circles were generated automatically and tabulated descriptively in percentage form through Microsoft Excel. The qualitative data from the role sheets and the online literature circle discussion sessions were analyzed thematically according to the research questions.

Results

Based on the first research question, which aimed to discover the general perceptions of the learners on reading and participating in online literature circles about Hamlet, a Shakespeare’s play, the following are two figures showing the overall results. Figure one shows their overall perceptions of online literature circles, while Figure two depicts their perceptions of the specific roles in the online literature circles.

Figure 1. Overall perceptions on online literature circles

Figure one indicates that the online literature circles were perceived positively among the participants. The majority said that the online literature circles were interesting (24.1%), and they
loved it (18.6%). Others regarded online literature circles as engaging (15.9%), fun (14.9%), and easy (5.6%). However, some participants perceived them as challenging (15.8%), and a few felt they were confusing (5.4%) and boring (0.7%).

Figure 2. Learners’ perceptions of the specific roles in the online literature circles

Figure two reveals that majority of the participants had positive perceptions about all five roles. Generally, all five roles were perceived as interesting as it was the highest response. This shows that the participants were engaged in learning through the online literature circles.

In examining the findings of the specific roles for the online literature circles in Figure two, the participants showed positive perceptions of the Creative Connector’s role. Although more (16.7%) participants found the role to be challenging as opposed to easy (7.4%), many accredited it as interesting (24.1%), and they loved it (20.4%). The following were testimonies given about the role in the survey.

“It really touched my heart, especially when Ophelia drowned herself after her father's death.”

“It was a bit emotional when we went through the connection, yet still fun because everyone was responsive.”

Of the five roles in the online literature circles, the role of the Device Detective was nominated as the most interesting role (28.1%) and easiest (9.4%). During the literature circle discussion, the Device Detective from Group four found two literary devices in Act one that are ‘imagery’ and ‘personification.’ The following is an excerpt from their online literature circle discussion about the literary devices.

Table 2. Online Literature Circle discussion on Literary Devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Connector</th>
<th>Device Detective</th>
<th>Discussion Director</th>
<th>Imaginative Illustrator</th>
<th>Passage Picker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Confusing</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>Loved It!</td>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isya: When Horatio said “This bodes some strange eruption to our state” in Scene 1, Line 68, this shows imagery was used by Shakespeare to picture how the presence of the ghost has affected the state. There are many types of imagery, such as visual imagery, thermal imagery, auditory imagery. In this case, visual imagery is used to describe the effects of the ghost on the state.</th>
<th>Sara: What is thermal imagery?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara: Thermal imagery is something related to temperature. It is to show or emphasize the condition of something but with temperature, for example, the warm ocean water. “Warm” is an example of thermal imagery to show</td>
<td>Isya:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the temperature of the water.
Ok, now let me share about personification. Horatio said, “But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad, walks o’er the dew of yon high eastward hill” in Scene 1, Lines 165-166. Horatio was describing morning as a person as it was wearing reddish brown clothing and did the action of walking.

Reen: When reading the play, most of the time, I spotted many personifications. However, the examples given during our discussion were not the same as what I have found, so it makes me understand more about personification as one of the amazing ways to describe a person or a thing.

Rose: I love the use of personification in Hamlet that you explained, which is the personification of morning. I think that it was a creative way to describe the action of the morning, and I think it helps the reader use their thinking skills a bit in getting the meaning of that particular part.

Anas: I also noticed the use of personification when reading Hamlet and the examples you gave are the same as what I have found. I was not clear about certain words, but after listening to your explanation, I know what they mean.

As for the role of the Discussion Director, many participants loved it (24.0%) and found it fun (18.0%). They had a great time to lead their members in the discussion and listen to ideas, opinions, and perspectives. Their comments in the survey about the role were such as “It was great!”, “I had a great time”, and “It was fun and informative” show that the participants had positive perceptions about it. Some loved the role as one participant in the survey said,

“The discussion was indeed rich with ideas and perspectives. I wish the lecturer could listen to our discussion.”

Another participant felt it was so fun as he stated,

“We keep giving a lot of ideas and opinions regarding the act.”

Among the roles, the Imaginative Illustrator was identified as the most challenging (23.1%) and confusing (7.7%). Some thought the role was fun (15.4%), engaging (15.4%), or they loved it (15.4%). The following are the illustration and description given about Ophelia in Act four, Scene five by the Imaginative Illustrator from Group six in her role sheet.

**Figure 3.** Illustration by an Imaginative Illustrator in the online literature circles
The illustration is a portrait of Ophelia, with unkempt hair, sunken cheeks and eyes, and rosemary and daisy flowers around her, singing the song while a tear rolls down her right cheek. According to Ophelia, the rosemary is for remembering. The daisy means unhappy love. I tried to capture Ophelia’s crazed self, after the death of her father, and her lover leaving her. I drew this portrait because I empathized with her fragile and young self. I felt that in her insanity, she was just a broken girl that did not deserve the tragedy.

In presenting this illustration in the online literature circle discussion, one of the members in the group mentioned the following:

I want to talk about how I’m feeling based on this drawing. Some people will feel bad for Hamlet during the whole story, but I feel bad for Ophelia. I think that her story is very tragic compared to Hamlet’s. I can relate the drawing to the theme – reality and deception, and truth and madness. Also, the flowers that Ophelia was holding.

Based on Figure two, the role of the Passage Picker was voted as the second most interesting (25.0%) and engaging (17.5%). In an online literature circle, a Passage Picker from Group nine selected Line 56 from Act Three Scene Three, where King Claudius said, “May one be pardon'd and retain th' offence?” The following was his reason for choosing it:

I think it’s interesting that Claudius is consumed with guilt. Before this, he mentioned briefly (Act three Scene one, Line 50-55) that he felt guilty but only started praying about his sins until Scene three. I think this scene shows the ugliness of humanity. Because we all at some point have committed a sin that resulted in us reaping the benefits of it, and even though we feel guilty about it, we still reap the fruits of it.

In response to the reason given in the online literature circle discussion for choosing the line, one member from Group nine gave the following comment:

I think this passage is good. It shows that even a killer has a bit of humanity left in him. It shows that every person is good and bad, depending on the situation. Inside us, everyone will have a negative and positive personality. When Claudius prays, he shows regret for his actions. From my point of view, even though Claudius did something good in his eyes, the effects of that doing will be bad in the eyes of others.

Based on the second research question, the following demonstrates the findings on the challenges faced by the participants in learning Hamlet through online literature circles. Below are the responses given by the participants in the survey conducted.

Table 3. Challenges faced by the participants during the online literature circle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Number of participants (N)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 No problem</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Difficulty in understanding Shakespeare’s text</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Challenges with the roles</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Internet connection</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Time management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Lack of technological skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table three demonstrates that majority of the participants did not have any problem (62.9%) in the online literature circles. However, there were a few challenges that some participants experienced. The two main challenges were related to difficulty in understanding Shakespeare’s language (11.3%) and the roles (11.3%) they played during the online literature circles. The following were their responses about the challenges in Shakespeare’s language obtained in the survey.

“I think trying to understand the Old English words is quite hard. Because I googled the words that I don’t know, and there are a lot.”

“The language used in Hamlet sometimes is a bit confusing for me, but I managed to understand after reading it several times.”

These were the responses given about the challenges with the roles in the online literature circles.

“I am bad at drawing and struggling with creativity.” (The Imaginative Illustrator)

“It's quite hard for me to make the connection. But, at last, I manage to complete my task after doing a lot of reading.” (The Clever Connector)

A few participants (9.7%) faced problems with internet connection when low internet bandwidth and weather conditions caused interruptions. Finally, less than a handful admitted to having time management (3.2%) or technology skills (1.6%) as challenges.

The participants’ perception of the challenges in the online literature circles inevitably steered other discoveries. Based on the third research question, the following were comments given by the participants about how they overcame the challenges they faced in learning Hamlet through the online literature circles. Some relied on the members of the group as revealed below.

There were things we don’t know. But my groupmate who watched the movie explained to us very well.

Since the play is quite long and the language is hard to understand, I received some input from my friends.

Two participants perceived that the storyline was easier to understand when they discussed their connections. Others attempted to explore privately, as mentioned below,

“I find it very difficult to relate the play to my real experience, so I just connect it to a drama I recently watched.”

Though learning technological skills need time and effort, the participants voluntarily explored different applications to address their weaknesses. This was especially true for the role of the Imaginative Illustrator, who is responsible for drawing or sketching images that represent their imagination. Some tried to use technology to develop their illustrations. The following
picture done by the Imaginative Illustrator from Group five shows how he visualized the last act of Hamlet when everyone died at the end of the scene except for Horatio, who later lived to tell the actual tragedy.

Figure 4. An illustration created by an Imaginative Illustrator using Canva

Discussion

Based on research question one, this study demonstrated that the participants had positive perceptions of the online literature circles as majority perceived it as interesting, engaging and they loved it. This finding concurs with studies by Ferdiansyah et al. (2020), Fortune et al. (2021), and Novitasari et al. (2021). The online literature circles successfully provided encouraging and enjoyable learning experiences for learners which develop motivation and positive attitudes towards literature (Dogan et al., 2020).

A close look at the perceptions of the roles showed very positive discoveries. For instance, the role of the Device Detective that was perceived as the most interesting role, provided the opportunity for the participants to become independent learners when they discussed literary devices based on multiple perspectives. This finding corresponds with studies by Cave (2018) and Imamyartha et al. (2021). Similar to their findings, the participants learnt and expanded their meaning-making capabilities (Daniels, 2002) and became accountable for their learning when they needed to find and share the literary devices through the online literature circles.

The role of the Discussion Director was equally perceived as interesting, and they loved it. The participants discussed topics and questions that they were concerned and interested in. This builds motivation in learning literature, as the engagement in social interactions about literature gave them space and time to share, listen to, think, and reflect from multiple perspectives about literature. This was in line with findings from previous studies conducted by Dogan et al. (2020), Li (2018), and Noah (2018). The experience of learning together also created a valuable platform for practice, training, and development of communication and critical thinking skills, which contributed to cognitive and language development apart from quality attributes such as cooperation and team spirit.

The Imaginative Illustrator’s role challenged the participants to move beyond the efferent stance. In reading and exploring meaning, the role nurtures exploration into the aesthetic, triggering imagination and creativity (Karolides, 2020). The illustration exhibited hidden talents and encouraged other participants also to adopt the aesthetic stance when they expressed
personal feelings and thoughts from multiple perspectives about the picture. The aesthetic stance can be nurtured when meaning is explored personally and shared through social interactions (Rosenblatt, 1978; Daniels, 2002) and the assigned role has the power to assist the participants to embrace aesthetic and cognitive skills (Li, 2018).

Next, the role of the Passage Picker was perceived as the second most interesting role. This is parallel to the discovery by Cave (2018) who found that literature circles nurture deep aesthetic and thinking processes through reflective practice. The participants were not only engaged during the discussion, but they also became critical in responding to their groupmates.

Alternatively, the findings for the second research question on challenges as depicted in Figure one and Table three proved that the participants did not face a lot of challenges. The two main challenges were the language in the play and the roles in literature circles. For the language presented in Hamlet, Murphy et al. (2020), explained that different syntax order may have challenged learners in reading the play. As for the second challenge, the findings showed that the Imaginative Illustrator’s role was perceived as the most challenging. In adopting this role, Karolides (2020) justified that participants had to move beyond the efferent stance into the aesthetic, triggering imagination and creativity. The illustration in Figure 3 exhibited hidden talents and encouraged other participants also to adopt the aesthetic stance when they expressed personal feelings and thoughts from multiple perspectives about the picture. This is similar to the finding in a study by Li (2018) who found the roles in literature circles to have the power to develop the aesthetic skills. The role was also successful in promoting different skills and knowledge through the picture and the use of technology (Combes, 2021). This was also consistent with the findings of the study by Ferdiansyah et al. (2020). The role of the Imaginative Illustrator may have challenged the participants to explore the aesthetic stance. However, it also nurtured their ability to develop and share meaning through social interactions.

With regards to the third research question, the findings showed that the participants addressed the challenges on the language and roles by doing more reading. Others were resourceful in getting help from the ‘experts’ in the online literature circles, which according to Çetinkaya and Topçam (2019), demonstrated cooperation and teamwork in advancing different skills and attributes. The experience motivated them to become innovative in finding solutions. According to Dogan et al. (2020) and Ardi (2017), resolving challenges faced nurtures learning autonomy among learners.

For quality online discussions, it depends not only on smooth planning on the part of the instructor (Varga et al., 2020) and the active participation of learners (Cave, 2018), but also on technology (Combes, 2021) as it influences the quality of learning for both the participant who faced internet problem and other members during the online literature circles. The online literature circles created a conducive environment for literature instruction among the TESL pre-service teachers. Through the different roles, this study revealed the advancement of different skills and attributes that ensure quality in preparing these trainees to become active literature learners and talented future TESL teachers (Aytan, 2018).
Conclusion

This article uncovered the perceptions of TESL pre-service teachers on the use of online literature circles as the instructional means for the learning of Hamlet. The findings showed that the participants’ perceptions were positive, and found learning literature through online literature circles as interesting, engaging, challenging, fun, and they loved it. Though some faced challenges related to the language of Shakespeare’s play, the roles for the online literature circles, internet connection, time management, or lack of technology skills, online literature circles were effective as a platform to train TESL pre-service teachers for literature instruction. The experience was vital in nurturing different learning abilities and attributes like cognitive, affective, and language skills and significant qualities such as cooperation, team spirit, ability to view multiple perspectives, hidden talents, motivation, and aesthetic pleasure.

In preparing a training ground for TESL pre-service teachers, literature instruction should include online literature circles. During the training, different skills involving language, cognitive, affective, and professional attributes can be nurtured. The nurturing of these skills and attributes builds the pre-service teachers’ social, ethics, and passion towards the teaching profession.

Acknowledgments: The research is funded by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia under a research grant no. Q.J130000.2653.18J28 PY/2019/01727.

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References


The Ideology of English-as-the-global-language in Taiwan’s Private English Language Schools

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Received: 9/23/2021     Accepted: 10/16/2021     Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
English is regarded as a key to globalization or internationalization and future success for Taiwan and its people. One of the most extraordinary results of English-as-the-global-language of English teaching and learning in Taiwan is private English language schools are ubiquitous. Research into how private English language schools weld together English-as-the-global-language and English teaching and learning has yet received much attention. This study aims to investigate how Taiwan’s private English language schools’ television commercials market English-as-the-global-language and what the underlying ideologies of English-as-the-global-language are. Exploring the ideology of English-as-the-global-language, Critical Discourse Analysis was employed herein to analyze 106 private English language school television commercials produced from 2000 to 2020 in Taiwan. The results indicate that English as the key to internationalization and future success is an ideology. Moreover, the ideological concept of English-as-the-global-language is central to English teaching and learning ideologies in Taiwan, such as an early start in English learning, English-only as the ideal English teaching method, and native-speaker norms in English teaching and learning.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, English-as-the-global-language, ideology, private English language

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.4
Introduction

This study’s central argument is that the ideologies of English teaching and learning in Taiwan’s private English language schools arise from the view of English as the key to internationalization. The ideology identified in this study is English-as-the-global-language, which has become a fundamental driving force for English language learning in Taiwan, especially following Taiwan’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO hereafter) in 2001. English-as-the-global-language refers to English being regarded as a tool for Taiwan to achieve economic growth, social modernization, and internationalization. For Taiwanese people, English language mastery is viewed as the key to improving their life and guaranteeing their future success in Taiwan or globally.

Taiwanese people who want to learn English can easily locate a private English language school, which refers to those that provide general English courses for different age groups without being geared for academic tests (e.g., secondary school or university entrance exams). Studying English at a private English language school is a widespread phenomenon and a necessary part of life for many Taiwanese people (Chang, 2012; Hsu, 2008; Tsai, 2020). This phenomenon stems from inadequate English language instruction in public schools that has caused private English language schools have become ubiquitous in Taiwan (Chou, Wang & Ching, 2012; Chung, 2016; Wu, 2014). This phenomenon also implies that English is viewed as a commodity. English as a commodity reflects that English has been marketed as a commodity by sellers (private English language schools) to persuade their customers (English language learners) to purchase this desirable commodity, English. Therefore, English teaching and learning cannot be viewed from educational perspectives but rather from economic ones. Moreover, for the past two decades, the assertions of English language policies in Taiwan have been based on English as the key to a better life and future in the context of globalization or internationalization. Li and Lee (2004) comment English is valued for its economic rewards. English has developed into a form of linguistic capital in Taiwan.

To investigate the ideological concept of English-as-the-global-language, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA hereafter) was employed in this study to analyze 106 Taiwan’s private English language school’s television commercials, which were collected from 2000 to 2020. The purpose of this study is to investigate how English-as-a-global-language has been viewed for the past two decades in Taiwan as a panacea and how the use of English has been associated with an ideology that encompasses future success and internationalism. To the best of my knowledge, there exist no published works exploring how private English language school television commercials market English-as-the-global-language and how these commercials construct and project ideologies of English-as-the-global-language.

Based on the purpose of this study, the following research questions need to be answered:
(1) How is English being marketing as a valued commodity and a key for internationalization and future success in private English language schools’ television commercials?
(2) What are the underlying ideologies of English-as-the-global-language in Taiwan?

There are two research objectives of the present study, first is to alert Taiwanese people who believe that English is a panacea for future success and the key to internationalization to
reconsider this viewpoint critically. Second, it is hoped that Taiwanese people need to be aware of and escape the underlying ideologies of English-as-the-global-language.

**Literature Review**

This literature review deals with English proficiency being regarded as a form of linguistic capital in English language policies and the proliferation of private English language schools in Taiwan.

Bourdieu (1986) distinguished four forms of capital: economic, social, symbolic, and cultural. Economic capital refers to material assets such as money or property. Social capital refers to factors that function effectively in social groups, such as connections, networks, and so on. Wacquant (2008) pointed out that symbolic capital (honor, prestige, recognition, etc.) is not perceived much by people but is regarded as a crucial power source. Loos (2000) explained that linguistic capital is one of the forms of cultural capital (competence, knowledge, skills, etc.) that provides its holders with symbolic power. Flynn (2015) stated that “the position of English as a language that dominates discourse on a global scale imbues the English language with an immeasurable weighting of symbolic capital” (p.157). English as a linguistic capital and globalization are inextricably linked in the contemporary world (Harwood & Lai, 2017; Gerhards, 2014; Schroedter & Rössel, 2021; Roth, 2019).

English has been viewed as linguistic capital in many English as Foreign Language countries (EFL hereafter) (Alm, 2003; Cameron, 2012; Gerhards; 2014; Harwood & Lai, 2017; Loos, 2000; Nino-Murcia, 2003; Park, 2011; Roth, 2019). Taiwan is no exception. Lan (2011) and Li and Lee (2004) asserted that English competence constitutes a form of linguistic capital in Taiwan. Based on Bourdieu’s theory, if Taiwan’s people possess English language competence, it helps them achieve future success with higher social status while raising Taiwan’s international competitiveness and accelerating Taiwan’s internationalization progress. Consequently, the Taiwanese people and government are willing to invest capital in English learning because they support the concept of English-as-the-global-language providing them with economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital or power. In other words, the possession of English is an issue of power or stratification, which is an ideology since English teaching and learning are viewed not being from an educational perspective.

The concept of linguistic capital is also demonstrated in Taiwan’s English language policies. They emphasize the economic benefits by concentrating on English proficiency as essential to global or international competitiveness. In a nutshell, Taiwanese English language policies are based on promoting English as the key to internationalization (Hsieh, 2010; Lin & Wu, 2015; Tsao, 2008; Zhong, 2013). It is imperative to discuss how English language policies in Taiwan respond to internationalization and why these policies have resulted in the proliferation of private English language schools for English learners of all ages. This process is not necessarily beneficial. The English language policies since Taiwan’s accession to the WTO in 2001 are discussed below.

To promote Taiwan’s internationalization, the Ministry of Education (MOE hereafter) started English instruction for all elementary school 5th graders in 2001 and 3rd graders in 2005. Moreover, the purpose of English education for elementary, junior high, and senior high schools
is to help students foster a global or international perspective with English as the key (Lu, 2011). Another important policy is a six-year national development plan, Challenge 2008 (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2006), launched in 2002. The government hoped to promote internationalization through learning English and increasing the entire population’s English ability. Under this plan, English would be made a quasi-official language. The Intelligent Taiwan – Manpower Cultivation Project (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2010) was implemented over seven years from 2010 to 2016. Its primary aims were to utilize English proficiency to raise Taiwan’s global competitiveness for promoting internationalization. Developing Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030, the most recent English policy, was issued in 2018 by the National Development Council (National Development Council, Taiwan, 2018). Two primary goals of this policy are to improve Taiwanese people’s English ability and enhance Taiwan’s overall international competitiveness.

The ultimate goal of these English policies is to achieve internationalization. It is presumed that Taiwanese people will have a better life and a more prosperous future if they possess a good command of English. If Taiwanese people have English proficiency, Taiwan will increase its global or international competitiveness. When English is viewed as linguistic capital, the government is usually willing to promote English education. Unfortunately, despite the vast amount of money spent and great effort made on English education by the Taiwanese government, the results of these policies have not proven beneficial (Hsieh, 2010; Zhong, 2013). The implementation of English language policies has not improved Taiwanese people’s English proficiency (Hsieh, 2010; Lin & Chou, 2011; Zhong, 2013). Taiwanese people’s English ability remains rated “low” based on English First (EF) Global English Proficiency Index and is falling behind most of their counterparts in EFL countries in Asia (Everington, 2018). One of the most extraordinary results of these policies is that the number of private English language schools has continued to increase rapidly since these policies were launched. According to the Short-Term Tutorial Center Information and Management System (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2019), in 2000, there were 792 registered private English language schools, and in 2001 a year after Taiwan acceded to WTO, there were 1,277. In 2019, there were 3,795 schools. The number of private English language schools is increasing rapidly (a 479% rise in the past 20 years), while the number of primary and junior high school students in the public school system has decreased every year. In 2001 there were 2,861,229, and in 2019, there were 1,778,581 primary and junior high school students (Executive Yuan, the Republic of China, 2020). The primary beneficiaries of English language policies or educational reforms in Taiwan are cram schools or private language schools (Lee, 2008; Tsai, 2020; Zhong, 2013). English language teaching and learning in private English language schools in Taiwan is a lucrative business.

While private English language schools are widely viewed as making an essential contribution in improving Taiwanese people’s English proficiency, there is a general lack of research on private English language schools (Chang, 2016; 2017). Moreover, research into English teaching and learning ideologies in the context of internationalization in Taiwan is very scant (Lin & Wu, 2015; Lu, 2011; Zhong, 2013). Besides, the media discourse used by private English language schools in Taiwan that possess ideological functions of English language teaching and learning has not yet been well researched (Chang, 2016; 2017). This study aims to fill the research gap by exploring ideologies of English-as-the-global-language by examining the television commercials used by private English language schools in Taiwan.
Methods

Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is used to investigate how social inequalities are established in discourses. CDA often focuses on media text, and “critical linguists go one step further in looking more closely at the social forces behind the linguistic persuasion” (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert & Leap, 2000, p. 327). Vestergaard and Schroder (1985) pointed out that “Advertising can be expected to reflect pretty closely the current trends and value systems of a society” (p.10). To explore how the close interrelationship between private English language schools and Taiwanese society is reflected in such discourses, the most well-known CDA theoretical framework, Fairclough’s (1992) three-dimensional discourse model, was employed in this study. The three-dimensional model refers to the analysis of language texts, discourse practice, and social practice. How this model was employed in this study is illustrated in the Data Analysis section.

Data Collection

In this study, 106 television commercials containing the concept of English-as-the-global-language were collected from 2000 to 2020. The commercials were broadcast on leading television stations in Taiwan and were recorded from television stations or downloaded from schools’ websites or YouTube. The definition of English-as-the-global-language refers to English as a tool for globalization or internationalization, which is viewed as the preferred path to future success for Taiwan and its people (see Introduction).

Data Analysis

To protect school identities, the symbol “XXX” replaces language school names, websites, and phone numbers. Translation of Mandarin Chinese (written and spoken texts) into English is underlined.

The First Dimension: Text Analysis (Description)

In this study, ‘text’ refers to written and spoken texts and moving images in television commercials. Take TC13 (produced in 2003) as an example.

TC13 starts with a giant inflatable globe with the XXX school name on it. In front of the globe, there are flags of different countries. A young female Caucasian wearing the XXX language school T-shirt and six Taiwanese children in different country costumes are standing in front of the flags in a classroom. The group of Taiwanese children wearing XXX English language school T-shirts sitting at a big table are looking at the female Caucasian and six Taiwanese children with different countries’ costumes. The female Caucasian says, “Welcome to XXX (school name)! It is XXX (school name) to the world.” The group of children sitting at the table shout with all their might, “We are XXX (school name) family.” 國際視野 (international perspectives) in Mandarin Chinese appearing at the bottom of this commercial from the beginning to the very end. The commercial ends with the school name and logo.

The Second Dimension: Processing Analysis (Interpretation)

The focal point of this dimension analysis is how private language schools market English-as-the-global language through written and spoken languages and images or moving images. Jewitt and Oyama (2001) pointed out that images are used as records of people, places, things, actions, or events in visual analysis. The following is an example (TC13) of the second dimension analysis.
There are two parts in the second analysis: written and spoken texts and moving images. One written and one spoken text were found in TC13. The spoken text by the female Caucasian teacher: “It is XXX (school name) to the world,” which straightforwardly tells the audience that English is a valued commodity for it is the key to the world. The written text 国際視野 international perspectives appeared in the commercial from the beginning to the end directly and constantly telling its audience that English learning enables them to gain international perspectives.

As far as moving images in TC13 are concerned, not only the enormous inflatable globe (symbolic – things) but also the flags of different countries (symbolic – things) and children in costumes of different countries (symbolic – things) symbolize the world or global village. The language school name on the globe means English is the global language; the group of Taiwanese children (symbolic – people) wearing the language school T-shirts in an English classroom (symbolic – places) looking at their female Caucasian English teacher (symbolic – people) and six Taiwanese children with different country costumes (symbolic – things). The commercial’s moving images imply that for Taiwanese children to learn English with a Caucasian or native speaker signifies entering the world (Symbolic – actions/events).

In sum, written and spoken texts and moving images were used in the commercial to signal to viewers that learning English from a Caucasian English teacher for Taiwanese children is the key to gaining international perspectives.

The Third Dimension: Social Analysis (Explanation)

The third dimension focuses on connecting private English language schools and Taiwanese society. English language schools’ presentation of written and verbal language and moving images in TC13 is intentionally employed to convey the ideological concept of English-as-the-global-language. How the ideology of English-as-the-global-language is manifested in commercials and how this ideology is associated with other ideologies in Taiwan are presented in the Discussion section.

Findings

Written and Spoken Texts

A total of 209 written and spoken texts (Tables one and two) were found in the data on marketing English-as-the-global-language. These texts can be put into two categories: English as a valued commodity (133 texts) and purposes of English learning (76 texts).

Table 1. English as a valued commodity (133 texts) and purposes of English learning (76 texts).
The Ideology of English-as-the-global-language in Taiwan’s Private English Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total texts</th>
<th>26</th>
<th>101</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>133</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2. Purposes of English learning

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enabling you to gain international perspectives</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilling your dream</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making you best in different fields</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling you to become a part of the elite in Taiwan or the world</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling you to travel around the world</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading you to a new wonderful life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total texts</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one indicates that English-as-the-global-language is viewed as a high-value product for English learners since English is presented as signifying the key to globalization or internationalization, a bright future, success, self-improvement (such as confidence, and so on), as an asset for hope, knowledge, opportunities, and competitiveness (international or in general). English is regarded as a panacea for overall future success nationally or internationally. English is a highly valued commodity; Table two demonstrates that private English language schools promote English learning as an essential tool for multiple purposes or future success, such as becoming elite in Taiwan or the world, attaining world perspectives, fulfilling learners’ dreams, and so on. The written and spoken texts in Tables 1 and 2 illustrate that English is presented as the global language, a high-valued commodity or linguistic capital and that learning English is imperative.

Moving Images

A total of 571 images (Table three) containing the ideological concept of English-as-the-global-language were put into four categories: People (241 images), Action/Events (124 images), Places (104 images), and Things (102 images).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic – People</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic – Actions/ Events</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic – Places</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic – Things</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total images</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. English-as-the-global-language in moving images

Children (113 images: elementary school children, 78: preschool children 35) and adults (132 images: Caucasians 82; Taiwanese parent: 16, local English: teachers 13, Taiwanese adult 13, Taiwanese celebrity 8) are used in the commercials. Children and adults play a crucial role in the concept of English-as-the-global-language will be presented after analyzing where they are and what they are doing in the commercials.

Arab World English Journal
ISSN: 2229-9327
Symbolic – Places

A total of 104 images were put into three categories; indoors (80 images: English classroom 73; stages 5; an international airport; 1, museum; 1), outdoors (21 images: forest, baseball diamond, field, beach, running track, and so on) and the universe (4 images). The analysis of actions or events will demonstrate what children and adults are doing in the above-mentioned places in the commercials and how they are used to promote the concept of English-as-the-global-English.

Symbolic – Actions/Events

The following describes actions or events carried out by children and adults in the commercials. A total of 124 images of actions/events were found in the data. These images can be put into English language teaching and learning (85 images), speaking and looking at audiences (15 images), communicating with Caucasians (10 images), and others (14 images) categories. In the English teaching and learning category, 85 images of Taiwanese English learners, mainly children (68 images) either in the classrooms or outdoors, are learning English with white Caucasians (75 images), without teachers (nine images), or with local English teachers (one image). Clearly, in English learning in private English language schools, white Caucasian or native English-speaking teachers (NESTs hereafter) are promoted as better or ideal teachers.

Fifteen images (second category) depict people (English language learners: children or adults), parents, and Taiwanese celebrities (actresses, singers, and athletes) looking and telling their audiences that English is a global language and that learning English is the key to the world and future success. The third category (10 images), Taiwanese people communicating with white Caucasians or native English speakers, illustrates that English is the international language for communicating with English native speakers. The last category, others (13 out of 14 images), illustrates Taiwanese people receiving national or international awards, flying around the world, winning a running race, going abroad, working in a different workplace, knocking down a wall, and then seeing the light, directly revealing to their audiences that English is the global language and key to future success. One image demonstrates a little Taiwanese boy with an astronaut costume who can see the universe after putting on an astronaut helmet provided by a Caucasian English teacher. This action suggests that the NEST provides children with English as a tool to gain international perspectives or to gain access to the international community.

Symbolic – Things

A total of 102 images indicate that English is a global language and key to future success. A virtual object indicates that English-as-the-global-language by using globes (35 images). Apart from globes, images of airplanes, world-famous landmarks, world maps, different countries’ flags, different countries’ costumes, a vast ocean, a universe, and a sky with kites can be analyzed in the same way as a globe. Moreover, children with different outfits of white-collar occupations (15 images, such as lawyer, doctor, businessperson, etc.), with spotlights and trophies, depict learning English as synonymous with future success.

Summary

The central theme of television commercials is that English is the key to the world and future success. The commercials, implicitly or explicitly, tell their audiences that English enables
Taiwanese learners to dare to dream, to fulfill their dreams for a successful future. Moreover, the schools’ commercials reinforce perceptions of the integral relationships among native speakers, early English instruction, and the English-only immersion teaching method as the fundamental concepts of English teaching and learning in the context of English-as-the-global-English.

**Discussion**

*The Ideology of English for Internationalization and Future Success*

The results illustrate that English is promoted as a tool needed for most purposes and is associated with internationalization, globalization, Anglicization, and future success that coincide with Taiwanese English language policies (Hsieh, 2010; Lin & Wu, 2015; Tsao, 2008; Zhong, 2013). For Taiwan, while English is presented and perceived as the key to gaining international competitiveness or competitiveness in general, some scholars (Chang, 2000, 2003, 2011, 2015; Chou, 2009; Liao, 2000; Hsieh, 2010) stress that English is not a panacea and English as the key to globalization or internationalization and future success is an ideology. Hsieh (2010) compared perspectives from nine language policymakers, managers, or human resource personnel from 18 “Top 50” enterprises. The significant finding of policymaker interviews was that English is not necessarily a key to enhancing Taiwan’s global competitiveness. Pan and Roever’s (2016) research finding demonstrates that 14 out of 17 employers with 10 to 30,000 employees argue that English proficiency is not their primary criterion for recruitment. Chang’s (2015) study indicates that English competence is rarely viewed as the key to globalization by a group of English major students in a leading university in Taiwan. Yuan (2016) from the Foundation for International Cooperation in Higher Education of Taiwan (FICHET) emphasizes that the Taiwanese government began promoting higher education internationalization in 2000. However, Taiwanese universities with English as a medium of instruction (EMI) programs, facilitating English language learning, or using English does not equate with internationalization. Moreover, Chang’s (2011) research findings illustrate that promoting English language learning has resulted in educational, economic, and linguistic inequality in Taiwanese society.

Chang (2003) at the Economics Department of National Central University stresses that internationalization can be achieved through trade and that Taiwan is an international trading nation. Taiwan ranked 12th among the most competitive economies in the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2019 global competitiveness report (Strong, 2020). It rose to 8th place by the Institute for Management Development (IMD) in the world economy competitiveness rankings in 2021 (Huang, 2021). Yuan (2016) and Liao (2000) elaborate that the type of internationalization Taiwan needs is based on cultural awareness and understanding and humanistic characteristics, not economic interest or western-centric internationalization. The Taiwan model of combating the COVID-19 pandemic has gained worldwide recognition and helped the international community in various ways in 2020 (Ellington, Melnik, & Shattuck 2020; Spencer, 2020; Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Taiwan’s assistance of other countries has enhanced its international image and participation; these are apart from English, so clearly, there are different ways to increase competitiveness in the international arena.

The arguments mentioned above, indicate that English proficiency does not equate to global competitiveness or future success. However, in reality, English learning has become a hot pursuit in Taiwan since Taiwan acceded to WTO in 2001, for Taiwan and its Taiwanese people
to further connect with the international community and compete globally (see Literature Review). English-as-a-global-language is a deep-rooted ideology associated with other ideologies of English teaching and learning in Taiwan, discussed in the following section.

**The Ideologies of English Teaching and Learning**

The results indicate that western-centric globalization or internationalization is promoted by private English language schools. The images of places or countries in the commercials refer to English-speaking countries; the images of ‘foreigners’ almost always refer to Caucasians. English language learning is promoted as offering the ability to use English to communicate with native speakers in real-life communication. However, Modiano (2001) states FL speakers primarily need the English language for cross-cultural communication (which most often, for such people, takes place with other non-native speakers)” (p.170). Taiwan is no exception. The most significant number of foreigners in Taiwan come from South East Asia (Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, etc.). According to Taiwan National Immigration Agency (2019), there were about 798,000 foreign residents in Taiwan in 2019; about 744,000 (93.23%) were from South East Asia and only about 15,400 (1.93%) from the USA (around 9,900 – 1.24%) and other English-speaking countries (5,500 – 0.69%). In other words, to communicate with native English speakers, Taiwanese English language learners need to study at private English language schools with NESTs or study abroad to immerse themselves in real-life communication in an English-speaking country.

English is learned as a foreign language for international communication in EFL countries by relying on the English-speaking country norms (Alm, 2003; Nino-Murcia, 2003; Yano, 2009). Another ideology of Western-centric English language teaching and learning is that NESTs with Western appearance or Caucasians are regarded as ideal English teachers teaching speaking proficiency. The white native speakers of English are viewed as exemplary English teachers in teaching English speaking proficiency in Taiwan, which is in line with Chang’s study (2017). If an ideal English teacher is a NEST, another ideology is that to acquire English speaking proficiency, English should be taught monolingually by native English speakers (Phillipson, 1992). However, many scholars (Auerbach, 1993; Lee, 2010; Lotherington, 1996; Lucas & Katz, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Wei, 2013) assert that the premise that the English-only immersion method should be employed in classes in the U.S. or EFL countries is an ideology.

The results of this study also demonstrate that another crucial issue is that English should be learned at a young age. It is a fact that Taiwanese children are being urged to learn English at younger ages, as mastering English is the key to modernization and internationalization. Phillipson (1992) asserts that a the-younger-the-better notion strengthens dependence on aid and expertise derived from English-speaking countries. In a recent policy, Taiwan will recruit 80 to 300 NESTs a year to teach in elementary and secondary schools in 2021 to develop Taiwan into a bilingual nation by 2030 (Huang, 2020). The increase in the number of NESTs reinforces the ideologies that ideal English teachers are NESTs, and English is the only medium of instruction. Moreover, some scholars advocate that English education at an early age could result in Taiwanese children possessing a lower proficiency in their mother tongue without necessarily improving their English ability. In other words, early English education in Taiwan might negatively impact their Mandarin Chinese or other ethnic language acquisition. In short,
ideologies of English teaching and learning such as the earlier the better, English-only instruction, and English-speaking country norms are woven together, reinforcing each other and constituting the context in which English is taught and learned.

Conclusion
Private English language schools in Taiwan are critical to promote the association between English and globalization or internationalization and to keep the discourse of English-as-the-global-language in circulation. In this study, I have investigated the underlying ideologies of English-as-the-global-language in private language schools’ television commercials. I have demonstrated that English is a form of linguistic capital, positing that English is the key to future success and internationalization in Taiwan, which is an ideology. The ideological concept of English-as-the-global-language is central to English teaching and learning ideologies, such as native-speaker norms, the ideal English teaching method, and an early start in English learning.

Implications
The result of this study has cultural, social, educational, and political implications for Taiwan. The first implication is that the premise of current Taiwanese English policies is that English is for international communication or exchanges. Therefore, English language teaching and learning should no longer emphasize English-speaking countries or western cultures but on various cultures in globalization. Taiwanese people need to view English as offering communication to share ideas and cultures with other nationalities in cross-cultural encounters. Ideally, Taiwanese English language policies should be based on multiculturalism or plurality, which focuses on ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

Second, the Taiwanese government and private language schools emphasize economic benefits by improving English proficiency to realize a brighter future for Taiwanese people. Many Taiwanese English learners believe that in the end, their efforts to learn English will result in a more promising future (such as studying abroad, a good job, a high income, etc.). In reality, various other agendas (such as physical health or mental well-being, personal lives, family, etc.) may be far more critical than learning English.

Third, English has been promoted by the Taiwanese government for the past two decades. The elevation of English status impacts mother tongue learning, and English threatens bentu or local languages (Liao, 2018; Tien, 2019; Pan, 2021). Pan (2021) reports that Taiwan is a multicultural nation; to manage a multicultural country, it is necessary to recognize and preserve ethnic, cultural, social, and linguistic diversity as valuable resources to keep abreast of world trends and compete internationally.

Fourth, there is a considerable gap in urban and rural elementary school English instruction, and the gap is widening (Chen, 2011; Lee, 2013; Lee, 2020; Lin & Chen, 2013; Sun, 2012). Lee (2020) argues that the English language proficiency of students from underprivileged families lags far behind that of students from better-off families, as many parents in rural areas cannot afford to send their children to private English language schools. The implication is that the Taiwanese government needs to provide equal opportunities for all Taiwanese children to achieve internationalization by learning English. However, English learning does not offer the
concept of education for all, and it deprives underprivileged children of their right to an equal education.

Fifth, Taiwan is facing unprecedented challenges due to a considerable spike of Covid-19 in 2021. Moreover, The Economist declares the most dangerous place in the world is Taiwan, owing to the increasingly tense relationship between Taiwan and China (Lin, 2021). In short, English learning cannot solve the imminent social and political problems in Taiwan.

Finally, ideologies of language teaching and learning of English-as-the-global-language in this study deserve more attention from laypeople and English educators, researchers, and policymakers. Taiwanese people need to consider cultural, linguistic, and social factors in local and global domains. If Taiwanese people view the English language as a tool for achieving internationalization for Taiwan while disregarding Taiwan’s current economic, environmental, social, linguistic, political, and other problems, Taiwan will not successfully compete internationally to the degree it desires.

About the author
Dr. Jackie Chang is an associate professor at National Pingtung University in Taiwan. She teaches English teaching methodology and curriculum design and evaluation for elementary school English teachers. The focus of her research interest is the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), in particular, the social, cultural, and political contexts of EFL.

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Cultural Component in Professional Development of Non-philological Specialties Students in the Process of Studying a Foreign Language

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Abstract
The professional development of future specialists has to meet global and domestic standards. Cultural competence is essential for future professionals as it makes it easier to collaborate with foreign professionals, improve their competitiveness in the world labor market and increase the specialist’s ability to solve professional challenges. The study attempts to answer the questions about the importance of cultural competence development of non-philological students in the process of studying a foreign language and methodological approaches used in this process. The aim of the paper is to present the model of cultural competence formation of future non-philological specialties experts at the foreign languages classes and determine its main components and formation conditions. The study investigates how cultural competence development changes the value-based attitude towards future professional activity and promotes the interest in learning, personal and professional enrichment. Students of three Ukrainian higher educational institutions (from the first to third course) have taken part in the research. The research used conscious-comparative, audiolingual, and role-play methods. The study of the results, based on four criteria (cognitive, moral-axiological, communicative, cultural), showed that learners started to understand the necessity of cultural enrichment of disciplines. The research proved that the implementation of the given technique resulted in the improvement of students’ learning and cognitive activity and enhancement of the general level of training. The paper gives some recommendations for language teachers to organize the process of learning a language on a cultural basis.

Keywords: Competence approach, cultural competence, cultural component, foreign language, non-philological students, professional development, quality of training

Introduction

Intensification of globalization processes at the beginning of the XXI century, mutual influence, and interaction of different cultural communities made intercultural communication an integral part of the harmonious existence of organizations, establishments, and individuals. The changes faced by modern society trigger cultural transformation (relationship between people, formation of new cultural values and norms, etc.). Nowadays, according to the requirements of the specialists’ quality of training, professional education trains specialists taking into account competence, humanistic and cultural aspects.

Economic, political, scientific, social interaction between countries requires a great number of effort. Therefore, in the view of the world-leading organizations, the crucial tasks of education are: to facilitate learning of other nations’ language, culture, history, improvement of mutual understanding and cultural interaction (The Council of Europe Contribution, 2019); to focus on educational process on the development of mutual respect, tolerance, friendship among nations, racial and religious groups and peacekeeping (UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education, 2006); to overcome communication barriers, to turn cultural and language diversity from communication obstacles into a source of cross-fertilization and mutual understanding (Common European Framework, 2001).

The necessity to correspond current requirements in the sphere of intercultural communication and collaboration emphasizes the importance of developing the standards of higher education and put in place a system of professional training that correlates to European demands for higher education.

The analysis of adopted standards of higher education for different specialties proves that the ability to use foreign languages to solve communicative tasks in different spheres of activity, ability to keep and multiply moral, cultural, scientific values, and society’s achievements are among the key features of a specialist (Standards of Higher Education of Ukraine, 2019).

World and domestic standards of higher education facilitate changes in the professional training of non-philological specialties students. Needless to say that nowadays, the development of professional and general culture, soft skills, communicative skills, intercultural knowledge is as important as hard skills development. So, the aim of professional training is to prepare a person for professional activity in a specific area of industry and for harmonious interaction in a multicultural world as well.

The world’s population is multinational, so it is vital to develop cultural components in education to improve mutual understanding.

Current globalization processes in society amid the mass media extension where emotions prevail over the sense, situational knowledge over logical one, behavioral skills over intelligent conscious behavior, have resulted in changes in thinking and the system of values became the reason of culture isolation from professional activities. The researchers put emphasis upon the necessity to expand the cultural component in education, to construct the educational process on the basis of human values (Kochneva et al., 2018).
The professional development of future specialists has to meet global and domestic standards. The ability to collaborate with specialists from other countries, be competitive in the world labor market, solve professional challenges is significant for future professionals. Therefore, the development of cultural competence in the process of learning foreign languages is essential.

The aim of the paper is to present the model of cultural competence formation of future non-philological specialties experts at the foreign languages classes and determine its main components and formation conditions.

To identify the problem and find a solution to it, the current study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main methodological approaches used in the professional development of non-philological specialties students in the process of studying a foreign language?
2. Why is it essential to develop the cultural competence of non-philological students while learning a foreign language?

The objectives of the research are the following: to analyze the essence of the term “cultural competence”, characterize its key components, analyze the factors which affect the formation of cultural competence, to develop and test the effectiveness of the cultural competence formation technique.

**Literature Review**

**Competence Approach in the Process of Professional Development**

Global processes of education modernization have promoted such credible international organizations in the field of education as the UNO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, the Council of Europe, etc. to implement the project “Educational policy and peer-to-peer education”. Based on the analysis of specialists’ training efficiency and effectiveness in different countries, the experts of these organizations offered a competence approach that transforms traditional models of education from informative and procedural to effective.

It is thought that implementation of competence approach allows to form self-motivated, self-sufficient, and responsible members of society that will acquire not only thorough knowledge but skills to use it, solve professional and social tasks and accept the consequences as well (Panfilov & Furmanets, 2017); develop key competencies in intellectual, communicative, information, social, and other spheres (Palamar, 2018; Kovalchuk & Fedorchenko, 2018). It is characterized by the versatility of the methods and by a wide range of activities that replace the traditional lecture-based courses, for case studies and scenario-based teaching (Ait Haddouchane et al., 2017).

The ultimate goal of competence approach implementation, according to Palamar (2018), is to develop skills that allow a personality to integrate into the social and cultural space: understanding of the essence of a human, the relationship between a person and nature; understanding the uniqueness of culture and mechanism of interaction; ability to cooperate in the context of dialogue of culture; ability to choose the appropriate sources of information, understand the variety of decisions, and solve tasks in different spheres (social and professional); ability to navigate in key issues of current life such as environmental, political, intercultural cooperation.
Cultural Component of Education

The analysis of the main features of the competence approach allows concluding that the development of such personal traits as tolerance, awareness of belonging to the world culture, usage of language and culture for active dialogue with representatives of other nationalities is one of the major challenges of education. Hence, the development of cultural competence is of high importance.

Both foreign and domestic scientists emphasize on the importance of the cultural component of education. Issues of dialogue of cultures are represented in the studies of Astafiev, Bakhtin, Bibler, Pomerants, Telychko (Telychko & Kostiuk, 2019), Zyrianov. The development of the communicative culture of future specialists of different training programs is shown in the papers of Grynkova, Kolbina, Kopus, Puz, Vasyleva. The development of culture-universe competence in the sphere of professional education is studied in the works of Andrushchenko, Fakhrutdinov, Goncharenko, Gopalkrishnan, Hrechanyk (Hrechanyk, 2020), Ivanov, Myshyakova, Zagrebin, Ziaziun. The improvement of common culture arises from the necessity to develop future specialists’ value professional orientation.

The key component of cultural competence is the concept of “culture”. It is considered by culture experts, anthropologists, social scientists, psychologists. According to Bakum and Palchykova (2019) “culture” is a basis for experience interchange between individuals in all spheres of activities and a determining factor in the development of a single informational cultural pluralistic society. The scientists study the influence of culture on society in detail (Jeannotte, 2017), interrelation of culture, environment, and education (Ivanov, 2016), and prove that language being a cultural code of nation has a great influence on the understanding between people (Zyryanova & Chesnokova, 2020). The reduction of cultural and educational levels is interconnected, so, the necessity to introduce the cultural component into the content of education is obvious (Fierro et al., 2018; Shutenko et al., 2018).

Studying the concept “culture” in multicultural aspect Melnyk (2016) determines it as a basis for communication and semantic argumentation of the goals of human activities. Culture provides the conditions for human self-fulfillment, develops the necessary patterns and norms of behavior, and facilitates social regulations.

The above-mentioned definition proves the possibility and necessity of social impact on the cultural level of future specialists to develop their value professional orientation while training at higher educational establishments. Therefore, the formation of cultural competence is the integral component of the effective educational process that helps to improve its quality.

According to Fedortsova (2016), cultural competence is the complex unit that comprises culture, value and motivational sphere, ability to use acquired knowledge during the process of professional activity, ability to navigate in a multicultural environment, desire for self-development and self-education.

Cultural Approach in the Professional Development of Non-philological Specialties Students

Most studies that have explored the cultural component in education were concerned with the development of cultural competence separately from professional development. This study
focused on the development of cultural and professional competencies that form the integral process of future specialists’ formation.

Liddicoat & Scrino (2013) argued that globalization processes such as mobility and technological development reshaped the understanding of communication and ways of interaction and brought the necessity of cultural development during language teaching and learning to the highest rank.

Slastonin (1997) emphasized the necessity to enrich the content of professional education with the cultural heritage of mankind which involves universal ideas, personal values and qualities, means of understanding and humanistic techniques of professional activity. Ukrainian scholar Blahodieitelieva-Novk (2009) has proved the idea that one of the key factors of the society development is the ability to form two types of person – homo institutis and homo culturalis and modify the structure of the society in favor of these two types.

Studying the competences which are in demand in industry Modeer (1999) distinguished three key requirements for employees. She divided them in categories that involve knowledge, abilities and social competences. Among the latter the most important, according to the author, are cultural proficiency, communication skills and co-operation.

According to the scientists’ research, in order to build a new advanced society, it is necessary to develop the universal culture of future specialists through the acquisition of knowledge of cultural achievements, understanding, and perception of universal human values. In contemporary reality, this process is impossible without mastering new means of cultural heritage storing, transformation, and transmission (Standards of higher education of Ukraine, 2019; Kochneva et al., 2018; Telychko & Kostiuk, 2019; Hrechanyk, 2020).

Promoting such processes as self-understanding, self-concentration, self-fulfillment, search for new forms of experience, life activities individuals develop themselves, improve their strengths and skills, broaden communication boundaries, and form new needs and means of their fulfillment, namely, reveal the completeness of human existence.

Consequently, the involvement of an individual in culture is one of society’s urgent tasks, which is possible to perform by means of education.

It is a well-known fact that education is one of the most important forms of cultural heritage accumulation and transmission which has peculiarities in every national culture. The developers of Standards of Higher Education of Ukraine focus on the importance of the formation of the capability to preserve and increase moral, cultural, scientific values and society’s achievements based on the interpretation of history and laws of development of a subject area. This refers to cultural values in wide sense: scientific knowledge, professional skills and experience, achievements in art, moral standards and rules, standards and traditions of social behavior, etc.

Involving young people to social, cultural values and ideals, education promotes social order maintenance, whereas the implementation of new technologies and scientific rethinking of
existing knowledge facilitate social changes and social development. Therefore, education is a means of moral regulation and integration of society.

Taking into account all abovementioned, introduction of the cultural approach allows to analyse educational process through the prism of culture, develop a personality able to demonstrate individuality, acquire cultural competence and identify his / her position in the world of cultural values (Opachko, 2017; Bakum et al., 2019).

**Methods**

The introduction of such methods as conscious-comparative, audiolingual, and role-play promotes meaningful learning and makes the process of cultural competence formation easier. Learning foreign language comparing native and foreign language peculiarities has not only practical values but deepens knowledge, promotes respect to other peoples. Mastering language means the ability to carry on a conversation and understand spoken language. Language skills are formed through constant reviewing and remembering structures containing certain knowledge. Knowledge-based on students’ interest and proved by their emotions is absorbed better. Role-play method facilitates speech activity, develops language skills, improves communication and understanding between participants; enable to solve the certain problem through discussion. Simulation of a real communication allows taking into account age and individual characteristics of its participants, increases motivation, teaches how to overcome language barriers and as a result improves learning outcomes.

**Participants**

There are a lot of studies focused on specialists’ professional development and cultural competence development, but it is necessary to pay attention on such issues as cultural influence on the professional development, and training of specialists who are ready to work independently considering values and sociocultural peculiarities of a multicultural environment. To show the importance of cultural competence and its influence on professional development 308 students of the State Higher Educational Institution “Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University”, Kryvyi Rih National University, and Dnipro University of Technology with approximately the same level of academic performance were involved in the experiment. The number of students in the experimental group equaled 158 individuals, in control one – 150. The study in the control group was conducted according to the traditional technique, whereas the students of the experimental group were trained according to the author's experimental technique of cultural competence formation. The experimental technique was based on the implementation of students’ linguistic- and country-oriented studying while foreign language learning as well as on the activation of their work focused on comparing and analyzing language and cultural phenomena to ensure the development of the appropriate competence.

**Research Instruments**

The diagnostic and summative tests were carried out to determine the levels of formedness of cultural competence and to check the effectiveness of the methodology developed. The first group studied according to the developed methodology of formation of cultural competence based on the use of certain text material and a system of tasks and exercises aimed at finding the information about linguistic and cultural differences. The organization of the learning process according to the developed technique involves the use of pre-text, text, post-text exercises,
dialogues, polylogues, situations, linguistic and country-oriented commentaries, which creates favorable conditions for mastering the skills of identifying those culturally-marked units, that do not coincide in different languages, and of using the culturally-colored vocabulary in accordance with both communicative situations and non-verbal means of transmitting information (Bakum et al., 2019). In terms of the second group, the traditional system of foreign language learning was used. Accordingly, the first group will be considered an experimental group (EG), the second one will be considered a control group (CG).

Research Procedures

The experimental technology involved the gradual formation of cultural competence. The main content of the work at each stage is reflected in their names: motivational-axiological, productive-creative, and reflexive-corrective.

At the motivational-axiological stage the work was carried out with 1-2-year students. Its aim was to develop positive motivation for the formation of cultural competence; to lay the foundations of a value-based attitude to future professional activity through giving value substance to concepts needs, interests, beliefs, social guidelines, professional values, ideals, corporate culture and others.

For qualitative acquisition of primary knowledge, there were used explanatory, heuristic, research, and illustrative methods, which were embodied through problem lectures, conversations, stories, demonstrations, and laboratory experiment.

At the second – productive-creative stage of teaching, during which there were formed productive and creative qualities of the students who continued their studies in the 3rd year, there were used operational, productive and creative methods (heuristic, simulation, project), that ensure the transformation of theoretical knowledge into practical experience due to the simulation of professional activities. Heuristic methods (brainstorm, theory of inventive problem solving) facilitate the development of creative thinking, imagination, nonlinear thinking and ability to overcome barriers when solving creative tasks. Simulation methods simulate the professional activity. Project method cultivates the ability to solve tasks as a result of independent cognitive activity and provides the presentation of these results. These methods were implemented in laboratory experiments, creative projects.

The main task of this stage was to expand the range of cultural concepts, increase insight into culture-congruent types of professional activities, form the ability to implement the acquired knowledge and skills in practice, and apply culture-universal knowledge.

The aim of the third – reflexive-corrective stage of training – was to form a stable idea of the process and result of professional activity as a product of culture and the need to creatively, taking into account ethical considerations, implement the acquired professional knowledge and skills. During the work with the students, there were used dialogues, training, professional simulations, methods of creative projects, control and correction. Methods of creating and resolving professional situations (case-study) involved analysis, development of practical solution and evaluation of the specific situation and facilitated professional development of students’ individual psychological peculiarities to the fullest extent, placed the students in a
position of a fellow-teacher who teaches, helps, rather then moralizes; directs, guides, not just observes. Business games, communicative, professional situations erased barriers between a teacher and a student, besides, it was not the teacher who blended in students’ environment, but the students became the teacher’s colleagues. In this atmosphere, professional tasks were resolved together, which created special emotional relationships in the audience, which allowed to overcome a so-called “psychological barrier of artificial communication”, to get rid of stress and disturbance, anxiety.

The control and correction method considered students’ correction and evaluation activity, which actualized the processes of students’ self-improvement, self-education, and self-development. Individual and frontal assessment (questioning, solving of specific tasks, tests), social and psychological trainings business role-playing games were used.

Thus, the technology proposed modeled not only teacher’s activity, but also students’ educational and cognitive activity, which provided the necessary objectivity while implementing the technology proposed. It is important to implement this methodological complex during the entire process of specialists’ training.

The basic initial requirements for the content and organization of the learning process based on the proposed technique follow from the regularities of the modern stage of the specialists’ training process; they are aimed at solving the main tasks of the process. These requirements can be stated in the form of the following principles:

– interdisciplinary integration for the formation of cultural competence;
– professional orientation while organizing the learning process: studying of the humanities is determined by the system of knowledge and skills necessary to solve problems in the future specialty;
– integration of communicative and activity-based approaches to the formation of the course, which involves filling the professional component of the training process with communicative orientation;
– principle of tolerant relationships, which involves showing respect, empathy, and goodwill during discussions on solving problem situations, ability to express and substantiate own opinions;
– principle of concentric accumulation of general cultural experience while studying the disciplines of the humanities and professional cycles and its implementation in practical and professional activities (Zhumbei, 2016).

During the formation of cultural competence, various forms of work were used (individual, pair, group, collective ones); it motivated the students to consider each person’s opinion and work out a personal technique of Q and A development since this effects successful task performance. As a result, the students gained the experience of social and professional communicative behavior.

Basic Components, Tasks and Modulus of Cultural Competence Development

The cultural competence of non-philological students while learning a foreign language is an effective means of personal development through the activation of interest in cognition,
increased creative skills, and personal and professional enrichment. A model-project was
developed that reflected the overall aim of education – the formation of cultural competence,
which is a system-forming element of a holistic system of specialist training. This goal is
considered to be relatively independent in the process of professional education, which is being
implemented while studying a foreign language.

The model of cultural competence development is based on the introduction of the cultural
approach oriented to the implementation of the ideas of the relationship between man and
culture, which involves the integration of professional knowledge with cultural ones, formation
of attitude to professional activity as a cultural product and the acknowledgment of the formation
of the man of culture as a final result of the learning process. The competence approach as the
main idea of modern education improvement is focused on students’ gaining specific practice-oriendented knowledge and development of personal qualities that will allow future professionals to
become successful in life and professional activity. The communicative approach forms the
ability to create own phrases, uses cultural aspects to eliminate obstacles during the process of
communication and promote interest, makes the educational process closer to real communication.

The tasks for its achievement were determined as follows:
– to develop positive motivation for the formation of cultural competence and individual
intellectual and psychological qualities of students of non-philological specialties for its
implementation in professional activities;
– to form the key components of cultural competence: cognitive, moral- axiological, communicative, cultural;
– to enrich students’ experience in the practice of resolving professional problems in
accordance with their own and social cultural needs;
– to develop the skills of intercultural interaction for the effective implementation of tolerant
communication in professional activities.

The experimental model embraced three modules of learning process: content-related,
technological, resultative, the essence of which was conditioned by the regulations of cultural
and competence approaches.

Consequently, the content-related module determined the content of the formation of the
culture of world cognition and reflection, culture of social organization and regulation,
management culture, culture of interpersonal interaction, culture of business communication, and
information culture of future professionals. The task of this systemic element of the experimental
model is to provide students with knowledge about the connections between separate branches of
scientific knowledge based on intercultural interaction.

Technological module outlined the stages and relevant traditional and innovative means of
implementing the content of education. The task of this module is to provide subject-subject
relations between teachers and students during gradual formation of cultural competence, to form
the experience of intercultural interaction.
Resultative module contained criteria and indicators, characteristics of levels of cultural competence of future specialists. Its task is to provide tools for diagnosing the final results of the process of formation of cultural competence.

Creating the model the following factors that indicate the person’s future behavior were taken into account. They are *values* (encourage to be active and creative), *nature* of the activity, *attitude* to the environment, *experience, customs* and *traditions*. The following structure of the cultural competence during the professional training of students of non-philological specialties in the process of studying a foreign language has been determined:

- cognitive component represents the culture of understanding and representation of the world. It is based on the specialist’s knowledge about science, religion, art;
- moral-axiological component is based on the culture of social organization and regulations, managerial culture, the culture of interpersonal interaction;
- communicative component involves the culture of the business relationship, developed information culture to use it during the professional activities;
- cultural component is the understanding of the importance of the language as a cultural code of a nation, understanding of verbal and non-verbal peculiarities to interpret the message accurately, understanding of culture and values of other people during the process of communication.

**Criteria, Parameters and Indicators of Cultural Competence**

To define the components of the cultural competence of non-philological specialties students in the process of studying foreign language criteria, parameters and indicators were used.

The criteria of the cognitive component comprise the following parameters: skills in searching, processing, and analyzing the information from different sources; creative use of the information with respect to cultural aspects of the professional situation, ability to self-education and self-development, understanding the value of professional and cultural knowledge in professional activity. The indicators of the cognitive component involve: ability to use information from the Internet resources; to process different literature resources; to use computer technology for information processing; to use cultural information creatively in the context of professional training; to create a cultural-based product of the professional activity; to search information for improving one’s personal level and level of professional and cultural skills; attitude to templates in professional activity.

The culture of social adaptation and regulation, managerial culture and culture of interpersonal interaction are criteria of the moral-axiological component. Among the parameters of moral-axiological component of the cultural competence are attitude to different styles of organization, management, and leadership, ability to form a friendly socio-psychological environment among the staff to solve professional tasks effectively, behavioral, emotional, and communicative components. The indicators of the moral-axiological component are the following abilities: to identify the main goals of business activity, to interact within the group, to determine the success criteria, to facilitate the self-development of others, to apply a creative approach to solve unusual tasks, to cultivate the relationship.
Among the criteria of communicative component, the culture of business interaction and information culture were determined. The following parameters have been determined within the communicative component: readiness to communicate, communicative tolerance, language and speech skills, non-verbal behavior, ability to improve the language level, ability to accumulate and share the professional and socio-cultural experience. The key indicators of the communicative component are: understanding other cultures, tolerance to any partners in any situations, ability to use information resources effectively, demonstrating the knowledge of a language and other communicative systems during the process of communication, and understanding that language is crucial for professional development.

The culture of international communication and understanding of the linguistic view of the world is the criteria of the cultural component. Its parameters are: the development of the value attitude to the representatives of other cultures, knowledge of physiological, psychological, and social features of interlocutors, positive attitude towards the cultural values and norms of different nations, respectful attitude towards history, culture, and values of other people. The indicators of the cultural component are: knowledge of native and other cultures, understanding of the potential of language in the process of intercultural communication to achieve the results; ability to analyze the differences of culture-specific words of foreign and native languages, ability to compose sentences using idioms and proverbs.

Creating the model the following principles have been taken into account: communicative (creation of situations of real communication, development of a social, educational, cognitive, professional, and moral relationship and transformation of formed skills to life), professionally-oriented (development of successful professional communication skills), domination of problematic cultural tasks (use of knowledge of native and foreign languages to prevent cultural conflicts during the communication process with unknown culture). The experimental technology involved the gradual formation of cultural competence.

![Figure 1] Structural-functional model of formedness of cultural competence of students of non-philological specialties
Findings
The research paper shows that there is a lack of understanding of the cultural influence on professional development. So, the given model of the cultural competence of students of non-philological specialties has become methodological guidance both in the process of students’ professional training aiming at outcomes of learning and in the process of diagnostics of students’ readiness to the implementation cultural competence into the professional activity. During the experiment students’ cultural dimension has changed. They indicated the need for the cultural enrichment of the material of philological disciplines and professional subjects as well.

Cultural enrichment has contributed to the development of positive motivation to the development of cultural competence and has become the basis of value-based attitude towards future professional activity and made the understanding of culture deeper.

After the experiment completion, the quantitative and qualitative changes in the levels of formedness of the components of cultural competence were specified. To identify the levels of formedness of the cognitive component of cultural competence, there was used the test (assessment of the effectiveness of cross-cultural interaction and potential adaptability in cultural diversity by L. Van Dyne, S. Eng in A. Solodka adaptation) (Solodka, 2015) which made it possible to analyze thinking strategies for intercultural interaction, motivation for intercultural interaction, attitude to representatives of other cultures, effectiveness of the interaction and adaptation to a foreign cultural environment. Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 below show the level of formedness of the different components of cultural competence at the ascertaining and control stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient, %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascertaining</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the test results indicate that 20.3% of the EG students demonstrated the insufficient level of formedness of the cognitive component of cultural competence, the CG students demonstrated 38.0 %; the sufficient level of formedness was shown by 47.5 % of the EG students, and by 45.3 % of the CG students; the high level of formedness was demonstrated by 32.2 % of the EG students and by 16.7 % of the CG students.

The levels of formedness of the moral-axiological component of cultural competence were determined by using the questionnaire for tolerance estimation (Magun et al., 2003). The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify the types of tolerant attitudes to the representatives of other nations, cultures, and views.
Table 2. Level of formedness of the moral-axiological component of cultural competence at the ascertaining and control stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Insufficient, %</th>
<th>Sufficient, %</th>
<th>High, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ascertaining</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test results indicate that 15.8% of the EG students showed the insufficient level of formedness of the moral-axiological component of cultural competence, 58.9% of the students showed the sufficient level of formedness, and 25.3% of them showed the high one. Alternatively, 36.7% of the CG students demonstrated the insufficient level of formedness of the moral and value component of cultural competence, 52.7% of the students demonstrated the sufficient level of formedness, and 10.6% of them demonstrated the high one.

Table 3. Level of formedness of the communicative component of cultural competence at the ascertaining and control stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Insufficient, %</th>
<th>Sufficient, %</th>
<th>High, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ascertaining</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The diagnostics of levels of formedness of the communicative component of cultural competence involved performing of the appropriate exercises by the students. The formedness of the communicative component of cultural competence at the insufficient level was found from 12.7% of the EG students and 28.7% of the CG students; at the sufficient level, it was specified in 58.2% of the EG students and 59.3% of the CG students; at the high level, it was found from 29.1% of the EG students and 12.0% of the CG students.

Table 4. Level of formedness of the cultural component of cultural competence at the ascertaining and control stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Insufficient, %</th>
<th>Sufficient, %</th>
<th>High, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ascertaining</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The determination of the levels of formedness of the cultural component of cultural competence involved the use of the “Determination of the level of cross-cultural competence” methodology (Solodka, 2015). The results of the corresponding survey indicated that 15.8% of the EG students...
have the insufficient formation level of the cultural component of cultural competence, 55.7% of the EG students have the sufficient level, and 28.5% of them have the high level. In terms of the control group, 31.3% of the students have the insufficient level of formedness of the cultural component of cultural competence, 60.0% have the sufficient level, and 8.7% have the high one. The dynamics of formedness of cultural competence at different stages of the experiment is presented in the bar chart.

![Experimental group](image)

*Figure 2. Dynamics of the percentage values of the number of EG students with the insufficient, sufficient, and high levels of formedness of cultural competence at the ascertaining and control stages of the experiment.*

**Discussion**

The study aimed to determine the main components and formation conditions of cultural competence, promote the interest in learning, personal and professional enrichment. The analysis of the results, based on four criteria (cognitive, moral-axiological, communicative, cultural), demonstrated the following outcomes: learners have started to understand the necessity of cultural enrichment of disciplines; it has increased the perception of other culture and language as well; learning the language on cultural basis develops skills which are in demand in the professional activity; the necessity to integrate professional knowledge with cultural ones.

The research defined the main components of cultural competence during the professional training of students: cognitive (represents the culture of understanding and representation of the world); moral-axiological (based on the culture of social organization and regulations, managerial culture, culture of interpersonal interaction); communicative (involves the culture of the business relationship, developed information culture to use it during the professional activities); cultural (comprises the understanding of the importance of the language as a cultural code of a nation). The findings correlate with that of Fedortsova (2016).

The study findings consistent with the ideas of Liddicoat & Scrino (2013) that the cultural development of future specialists during the language learning increases their mobility and competitiveness on the labour market as well.
The results of the research support the Modeer’s (1999) idea that cultural proficiency, communication skills and cooperation are the key features of modern specialists.

The study shows that the development of cultural competence during language learning forms positive motivation improves intellectual and professional qualities; enriches students’ experience in the practice of resolving professional problems in accordance with their own and social-cultural needs; develops skills of intercultural interaction for the effective implementation of tolerant communication in professional activities.

Conclusion

The study aimed to examine how the development of cultural components in the process of learning language affects the formation of professional qualities. The research defined the model of cultural competence formation of non-philological specialties based on the cultural approach which involves the integration of professional knowledge with cultural ones, understanding of professional activity as a cultural product and the acknowledgment of the formation of the man of culture as a final result of the learning process. The development of all components (cognitive, moral-axiological, communicative, cultural) promoted the ability to interact with the representatives of other cultures; prevent conflicts in the interpersonal and professional fields; understand the equality of cultures; determine the success or failure of a communication act. The obtained results make it possible to state that the proposed model of the formation of cultural competence of the students of non-philological specialties and the technique developed on its basis certify its effectiveness. It proved the possibility to improve professional skills which are necessary for future specialists by means of culture.

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References


Teaching Translation during COVID-19 Outbreak: Challenges and Discoveries

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Received: 9/23/2021 Accepted: 11/10/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
The present paper addresses translation teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak, seeking to discover the challenges translation teachers encounter in online education and the solutions available to resolve them. Its importance springs from the fact that teaching almost all over the world had to depend on distant teaching/learning through electronic platforms to face the pandemic of COVID-19. Therefore, the present study seeks to discover the challenges encountered in online translation teaching and the proposed solutions to overcome them. It intends to answer the following questions: how does teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak look like? What are the challenges encountered in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak? What are the discoveries found in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak that may serve as advantages/solutions for the challenges faced? The paper uses a comprehensive questionnaire containing closed-ended and open-ended questions to elicit quantitative and qualitative data from sixty translation teachers. The data shows that 40% of the participants evaluate their online translation teaching experience during the COVID-19 outbreak as enjoyable. In contrast, no participant has assessed their online translation teaching experience as not good. About 23.33% of the participants consider their online translation teaching experience very good, and the same percentage applies to those who evaluate their online translation teaching experience as good to some extent. Thus, around 13.33% of the participants consider their online translation teaching experience good. The data also indicates that most participants have encountered obstacles in online teaching and have concurrently proposed solutions to resolve them.

Keywords: Challenges, COVID-19 outbreak, electronic learning platform, online translation teaching, solutions

Introduction

Translation teaching is a particular activity that includes translators and interpreters training either inside or outside institutionalized settings, such as universities. It can also serve as a means of teaching other fields, such as foreign languages (Hatim, 2001; Bassnett, 2006; Alwazna, 2013). Translation teaching began in the twentieth century. Teachers of translation hold the responsibilities of educating students, developing their translation competence, and training them to be professional translators (Clavijo & Marn, 2013). The activity of translation teaching involves various tasks, including curriculum design, course delivery, materials writing as well as application and implementation (Hatim, 2001).

The present paper addresses translation teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak, seeking to find out the challenges translation teachers encounter in online translation teaching and the discoveries/solutions arrived at to resolve them. It starts by offering a relatively brief account of specific approaches to translation teaching, presenting some work of different scholars on translation teaching alongside some theories and what translation students should learn and be trained in to be professional translators. The paper then discusses the usefulness of using corpora in translation teaching for both teachers and students. Using comparable bilingual corpora serves as a consulting source for the former and develops the linguistic knowledge, language use, and conventional language structures for the latter. After that, the paper reaches its main topic; teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. Three primary research questions the present paper seeks to answer. These are: how does teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak look like? What are the challenges encountered in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak? What are the discoveries found in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak that may serve as advantages/solutions for the challenges faced? As mentioned earlier, the present paper aims to explore the obstacles encountered by translation teachers in online teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak. It also seeks to pinpoint the possible solutions proposed by the participants to surmount the challenges faced.

To answer the three research questions mentioned above, a comprehensive questionnaire, which is composed of three closed-ended queries and four open-ended questions, has been conducted. This questionnaire has been distributed to sixty translation teachers from different parts of the world to contribute to the current research. After eliciting the responses from the target audience, the quantitative and the qualitative data, have been meticulously analyzed. In crude terms, as a response to the first research question, the data shows that about 40% of the participants evaluate their online translation teaching experience during the COVID-19 outbreak as enjoyable and exhilarating. On the contrary, no participant has assessed their online translation teaching experience as not good, nor has any participant assessed their online translation teaching experience as terrible. As for both the second and the third research questions, the data demonstrates that the majority of the participants have encountered obstacles in online translation teaching and have concurrently proposed solutions to resolve them.

Literature Review

Approaches to Translation Teaching

It is claimed that since translation involves differences at different language levels along with undeniable translation loss, teachers should work to improve their students’ abilities to address these divergences. Students should learn the typographical aspects in both the source and
receptor language, reference markers, false friends, linguistic differences as well as semantic incoherence. They should be fully aware of the syntactical and structural gaps between languages, including passive voice, gerund, word order, relative clauses, and syntactical ambiguities. They also need to be cognizant of the differences in the use of idioms and metaphors. Moreover, students need to be well-versed in the differences in the stylistic features between languages, such as conciseness, register, pedantic use of language, and avoidance of redundancy (Ibern, 1996; Prez, 2005). Teachers should inform their students of the names and locations of the relevant reference books, such as monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses, collocation dictionaries and so on, in addition to training them on how to use such references (Newmark, 1991). This is espoused by Hubert (2017), who places particular emphasis on the proper use of dictionaries, particularly the denotative and connotative meaning. He claims that translation is not a process of transmitting meaning from one linguistic system into another but rather an act of producing a new text.

The teacher chooses a particular text to be translated by students at home. They reword the selected text and bring it to the class for discussion. Each student reads out their translation and receives comments made by the teacher. Finally, the teacher picks up the optimum translation work and presents it to the class (Mahadi, Vaezian & Akbari, 2010). Kumaul (1995) has held the view that students should be taught to translate confidently. This requires students to have gained some experience concerning how to deal with culture-specific references found in the source text. Hence, when students find such culture-bound elements in the source text, they should be aware of their role in the original text and will know how to cope with them in the target text (Baer, 2017).

This may lead us to a very significant issue, which resides in the notion of whether students should be taught to translate into or from their mother tongue. It is claimed that translating into a native language is deemed the natural way. This emanates from claims made in bilingual education, which rest upon the notion that linguistic competence is seldom symmetrical. This means that translating into one’s mother tongue is superior to rendering texts into a foreign language (Hatim, 2001). This is supported by Newmark (1988), who argues over the merit of the notion that rendering texts into the language of habitual use is perhaps the only way a particular person can translate precisely, naturally, and efficiently. On the contrary, employers and teachers hold the view that bilingual linguistic competence can work both sides, and translators should encounter no problems to translate in both directions, i.e., from and into a foreign language (Hatim, 2001). Based on the preceding, teachers must teach and train students to render texts from a foreign language into their mother tongue and vice versa.

Nord (2009) believes that translation teaching should be made similar to the process of translating itself. She propounds ‘functionalist didactics’, which contains specific measures and criteria. Such criteria serve as the primary basis upon which choosing texts for translation in the class, classifying translation problems and translation strategies, monitoring students’ progress as well as evaluating translation work are primarily grounded. Within the same line of thought, Gile (2009) argues over the merit of the notion that teaching translation should be oriented towards the translation process rather than the analysis of translation errors. He sheds light on the importance of discussing certain translatorial concepts in the class, such as fidelity to the source text message, quality, comprehension, communication, and acquiring knowledge through
information sources. In this, Gile (2009) points to a preliminary learning stage in which students learn basic concepts and receive comments made by their teachers to improve their translation work.

Kiraly (1995), criticizing traditional translation pedagogy, points out that there are no evident translation teaching methods that develop translation students’ competence. He then explains that courses that enhance translation skills are generally not grounded in a clear line of pedagogical approaches aligned with the objectives of translation instruction, the understanding of the pedagogical impacts on students’ performance and translation proficiency, as well as the nature of translation competence. On the contrary, Kiraly (2000) suggests his translation teaching method, which is grounded in learning through experience and collaborative learning, which is primarily based on learner’s autonomy, awareness, and authenticity (Van Lier, 1996; González-Davies, 2017). He asserts that a typical teacher-oriented translation class does not seem to be the appropriate approach for improving a professional concept. What is more, such an approach fails to provide students with the opportunity of working in groups with other professionals. Kiraly (2000) proposes a translation class in which the teacher guides and scaffolds students to promote their translation standards from novice to professional translators. He stresses the importance of learning in groups and draws the attention away from the typical knowledge distribution in the traditional classroom toward multidirectional and multifaceted interaction between diverse participants in the classroom situation.

This is advocated by Colina and Venuti (2017), who assert that translation teaching has shifted from a positivist to a constructivist epistemology, from the focus on the source and target texts to the translation process and translator and from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches. Generally, Hurtado (2005) argues that there are three critical components involved in every translation teaching process; these are translation as the subject of teaching, translator’s competence as ability and knowledge needed for translation as well as the translator’s competence acquisition as a tool to develop such competence. Along similar lines, Colina (2003) asserts that translation is deemed a specific type of communicative competence. The translator, in addition to having discrete competencies in the source and target languages, is required to possess intercultural and interlingual communicative competence.

Another development within the pedagogical context of translation is represented by the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), which made a shift from read-and-translate to the learning process and learner, namely situated or contextualized learning. Kelly (2005), addressing the pedagogical context of translation, provides a descriptive account of the process specific to syllabus design and addresses the training process outcomes. Moreover, Kelly (2005) gives an example to illustrate the training process outcome by claiming that students are capable of collaborating with different professionals who take part in translation work, such as revisers, editors, fellow translators, terminologists, documentary researchers as well as layout specialists through specifying the possible difficulties encountered in each situation and adopting strategies for surmounting them.

Concerning electronic translation teaching, Hartono (2015) holds the view that it is time for translation teachers to include web technologies as part of their translation classes. They should train their students in the use of technology to be able to use electronic resources for improving
their translation performance. He asserts that translation teachers should set certain online activities for students, such as assigning tasks of reading online journal articles, making a tutor blog for sending assignments and providing feedback, making use of blogs for correcting students’ translation work, and so on. Such an approach based on web technology products is known as the interactive web teaching approach (Hartono, 2015). Indeed, the use of a blog in translation teaching is deemed beneficial. It serves as an electronic journal that can be updated at any time and can easily be used for assignment correction (Tseng, 2008).

**Using Corpora in Translation Teaching**

It is argued that using corpus tools in teaching translation would scaffold student translators in improving their linguistic knowledge, standard and non-standard language uses, and conventional language structures (Mahadi et al., 2010). Within the same line of thought, Jiang and Rij-Heyligers (2008), explaining the theme of using parallel corpora in translation teaching, point out that translators should possess intercultural competence to be intercultural mediators. They add that such requirement should be addressed when teaching translation. They then explain that for this requirement to be met, translation teaching should focus on the development of students’ global awareness and intercultural competence as well as gaining an understanding of diverse cultures. This is lent credence by Coffey (2002), who contends that source language corpora can be utilized in translation teaching to assist students in surmounting their interlingual problems, including culture-specific references, wordplay, and so on. He further adds that translation teachers can use the source elements of parallel corpora to formulate assignments for translation students and use the target elements to compare students’ work to that of professional translators.

Baker’s (1995) views concerning the use of parallel corpora in translation call for the notion of relying on parallel corpora to offer accurate models for translation students and trainees. Along similar lines, Pearson (2003) holds the view that comparable bilingual corpora can be helpful to teachers of translation as such corpora may serve as a consulting source to validate the teachers’ intuitions and offer students evidence. Pearson (2003) then accentuates that comparable bilingual corpora can never offer any detail concerning the language used in translation since all the texts contained therein are original. However, Pearson (2003) suggests using parallel corpora alongside comparable corpora as a solution to the current problem.

**Teaching Translation during COVID-19 Outbreak**

With the emergence of a new type of coronavirus termed COVID-19 in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, at the end of 2019 and its fast spread nearly over the entire globe, the educational systems in the world have inevitably undergone pivotal and momentous changes that have ipso facto affected the process of teaching and learning concurrently (Dhawan, 2020). Distance learning in the form of online education has become necessary (Khan, Kumar, Supriyatno & Nukapangu 2021) to maintain social distancing between people insofar as the virus is highly contagious. Indeed, it is argued that the panic caused by this virus is probably more dangerous than the virus per se. In other words, the fear resulting from such a virus is considered scarier than the virus itself. Amongst the academic fields that have been affected and have necessarily become taught online is translation. The topic of the present paper is unequivocally considered relatively new; there is only a single study in the literature conducted by Akmaliyah, Karman, Rosyid Ridho, and Khomisah (2020) that deals with the online teaching of Arabic
translation in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. However, the present paper differs from the said one insofar as it discusses the obstacles encountered in online translation teaching during this pandemic and explores the different solutions proposed by the research participants to surmount such obstacles.

Methods
The present paper adopts a mixed research method, utilizing both quantitative as well as qualitative research. This is clearly shown in the type of questions that make up the comprehensive questionnaire used to collect the relevant data to answer the current research questions. Although the present paper only exploits a questionnaire, it is considered to have adopted a mixed-method, which is composed of both quantitative and qualitative research. This is because the questionnaire concerned consists of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, the detail of which will be given in the section on ‘instruments’. The reason behind the use of the mixed-method in the current research lies mainly in the fact that adopting a mixed-method enables the researcher to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data, a matter that significantly supports the research, enhances its credibility, and strengthens its results.

Participants
The questionnaire in question has been distributed to sixty translation teachers who have taught translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. These translation teachers are indeed university professors who are specialized in translation studies and have taught translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak. Also, these translation teachers are professional translators, the contact addresses of whom are published on the websites of three well-known international translation associations, which are: The Chartered Institute of Linguist, American Translators Association, and International Federation of Translators. The reason for choosing this particular type of participants, i.e., being both translation teachers and professional translators, is to enhance the data gathered, strengthen the research results, and advocate its credibility.

Instruments
To answer the three research questions of the present paper, a comprehensive questionnaire, which is composed of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, has been utilized to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire consists of seven questions; three of which are closed-ended, while four are open-ended questions. The first question is closed-ended and contains within itself three different questions. The second and the sixth questions are also closed-ended, though they have no parts. The third, fourth, fifth, and seventh questions are all open-ended questions. In responding to the closed-ended questions to elicit quantitative data, numbers and percentages within tables have been adopted to mark the differences between the de facto choices based on the participants’ selection. However, in analyzing the open-ended questions to obtain qualitative data, the participants’ answers have been categorized into groups based on the similarities and differences of the participants’ responses. Similar responses have been comprised in a particular group, while other different reactions have been included in another group, and so on. Codes like ‘the majority of the participants, a group of participants, etc.’ have been employed to mark the distinction between the participants’ views on a particular phenomenon. In addition, specific quotations of some participants have also been used to advocate and give credence to a specific point of view.
As mentioned earlier, the first question is closed-ended and it possesses three parts: the first of which asks as to whether the participant is male or female, while the second investigates as to whether the participant considers himself/herself a translation teacher or a translation teacher and a translator. The third part asks the participants about the period during which they have been teaching translation, giving five different choices. The second question is also closed-ended and seeks to elicit the response concerning how the participants have taught translation during the COVID-19 outbreak, giving the participants six different choices, at the same time they can pick up more than one choice. Furthermore, there is a seventh choice where the participants can specify by writing how they have taught translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The third question is open-ended, asking the participants about the central electronic platform they have used in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak and the reason(s) behind such choice.

The fourth question is open-ended, investigating the advantages and drawbacks of teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak. The fifth question is also open-ended, interrogating the major obstacles encountered in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak and the suggested solutions. The sixth question is closed-ended, asking the participants to evaluate their online translation teaching experience during the COVID-19 outbreak, providing six choices. The last question seeks the participants’ views concerning the way in which teaching translation online can be improved.

Procedures
As stated previously, the present paper has used a comprehensive questionnaire, which consists of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data. This questionnaire has been designed on google forms. The link to the questionnaire concerned has then been sent to the e-mails of the participants along with a consent form, asking them to fill in the questionnaire if they wish, provided that any participant who would like to fill in the questionnaire should complete the consent form first, which confirms their consent/acceptance to participate in the current study. After receiving 60 google forms completed, the analysis process has been carried out. The quantitative data has been analyzed using percentages and numbers in tables, while the qualitative data has been analyzed using different codes and categories, as mentioned in the section of ‘instruments’.

Results
Table 1. Participants’ gender

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Participants’ profession

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translation teacher</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation teacher and translator</td>
<td>76.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Participants’ length of experience in translation teaching

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a year</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than a year</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than three years</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More than five years 40%  
More than ten years 33.33%

Table 4. *Participants’ way in teaching translation during COVID-19 outbreak*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online through a specific electronic platform</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through sending materials via E-mail</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through using WhatsApp</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through using Telegram</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through using Twitter</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through using Facebook</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. *Participants’ online translation teaching experience during the COVID-19 outbreak*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyable and exhilarating</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good to some extent</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not good</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrible</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Responding to the first question, table one shows that 60% who have participated in the questionnaire concerned are females, while 40% who have taken part in the questionnaire under study are males. Table two also demonstrates that the participants who consider themselves both translation teachers and translators are 76.67%, while those who regard themselves as translation teachers only are 23.33%. Finally, table three confirms that 40% of the participants have been teaching translation for more than five years, whereas 33.33% have been teaching translation for more than ten years. About 20% of the participants have been teaching translation for more than a year, while 3.33% have been teaching translation for less than a year. Likewise, 3.33% of the participants have been teaching translation for more than three years.

Answering the second question of the questionnaire concerned, table four shows that 90% of participants in the current questionnaire have taught translation during the COVID-19 outbreak online through a specific electronic platform only. In comparison, 10% of the participants have taught translation during the COVID-19 outbreak only through sending materials via E-mail. The table does not show any participant who has taught translation during the COVID-19 outbreak using WhatsApp, Telegram, Twitter and Facebook, or any other electronic application.

As a response to the third question of the questionnaire under study, the majority of the participants who have taken part in the current questionnaire have used ‘Blackboard’ as the central electronic learning platform in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. They have justified their choice by pointing out that ‘Blackboard’ is chosen by the universities with which they are affiliated to be the central electronic learning platform for distance learning. Moreover, the ‘Blackboard’ features mostly meet all the requirements of distance learning and...
live up to the users’ expectations. Furthermore, it is helpful, efficient, well-known, and easy to use.

Another group of participants have used ‘Zoom’ as the central electronic learning platform in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. They claim that ‘Zoom’ is helpful in translation teaching as it enables its users to display and view texts, which would facilitate the discussion of students’ translations as it would have been done in typical classrooms. Two other groups of participants that are equal in size have used ‘Google Meet’ and ‘Jitsi’ as the central electronic learning platform in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The group of participants that have used ‘Google Meet’ have justified their use by asserting that it is the platform approved by their universities, besides its clarity and its good connection. On the other hand, the group of participants that have used ‘Jitsi’ have supported their choice by stating that it is a useful platform and is deemed a free open software. The minority of participants have been found in two groups, which are equal in size. The first group have used ‘Microsoft Teams’ as the central electronic learning platform in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. In contrast, the other group have used ‘Learning Management Systems (LMS)’ for the same purpose. Unfortunately, no group of these have justified their use.

Other groups of participants have used two platforms in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The group that comprise the majority of the participants who have used two platforms have used both ‘Blackboard and Microsoft Teams’. They have backed their answer by stating that the said platforms are approved and supported by their universities. Two other equal groups of participants in size, though less in the number of participants than the previous group, have also used two platforms in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The first group have used both ‘Blackboard and Zoom’, whereas the other group have used both ‘Zoom and Microsoft Teams’. Unfortunately, no group of these have justified their specific use of two platforms. The last group of participants have not used a particular platform in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak; rather they have relied on various social media without specifying any of the social media utilized and without mentioning the reason(s) behind such behavior.

Looking meticulously into the answers to the fourth question of the current questionnaire, the majority of the participants who have contributed to the questionnaire under study have given both advantages and drawbacks in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak. Other participants have only mentioned benefits as they do not see any defects in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak. Conversely, there are groups of participants who do not see any advantage in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak and believe that such type of teaching in the current circumstances is entirely abortive.

Concerning the advantages stated by the participants, one group of participants have pointed out that teaching translation online has enabled teachers and students to exploit CAT tools, force students to use their computers, explore different technological resources and solve the problems particular to internet connection and lack of projectors, which may have been a source of annoyance to teachers in regular classes. What is more, giving online exams is better in terms of marking, managing, and monitoring. Another group of participants believe that teaching translation online is deemed a new learning experience as both teachers and students are exposed
to exploring and using new technologies in learning translation. This is lent credence by Khan, Kumar, Supriyatno, and Nukapangu (2021), who point out that technology helps improve the students’ learning possibilities. Such use of technology helps facilitate the teacher’s job in terms of sharing documents and other materials with students online. Also, online translation teaching makes teachers and students unworried about driving early to the university, arriving late, or even what to wear.

The third group of participants claim that teaching translation online helps make the translation teaching process continue despite the current critical circumstances that the whole world is experiencing. Using online tools, such as quizzes, polls, and chat would contribute to the interaction process. Students become more active, enjoying the online learning experiences. Another group of participants indicate that teaching translation online enables students to attend online classes wherever they are, and the times of courses are suitable for both teachers and students. Moreover, students can watch the lectures and listen to the recordings as much as they want. Indeed, teaching translation online saves teachers time and energy.

The fifth group of participants believe that teaching translation online has paved the way for the sake of providing multiple translation courses taken from different universities all over the world, a previously inaccessible matter. Hence, such diverse translation courses have attracted other students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Also, teaching translation online has allowed the teachers to further focus on providing each student with a detailed individual analysis of their mistakes and the areas they suffer from based on their translation assignment.

Another group of participants think that teaching translation online is considered more enjoyable than traditional teaching. There are various technological resources that can be of use to students. Such type of teaching is also deemed better than face-to-face teaching as all students can attend the class wherever they are, and they can listen to the recorded class as much as they want. What is more, teaching translation online plays an essential role in promoting the level of understanding the translation process and enhancing students’ research competence in the field of translation studies. This is seconded by Hubbard (2004), who argues over the merit of the notion that learning based on the instructional media reveals a clear impact on student’s performance in comprehending the course materials compared to traditional instructions. Online teaching also lends teachers more time to prepare for their classes.

The seventh group of the participants argue over the merit of the notion that teaching translation online is advantageous. A participant of this group states: “translation is a versatile subject which can be easily taught online with minimum challenges.” It is easy for students to follow their teachers online, making use of online resources. Moreover, teaching translation online helps increase the capacity of online classes, which may enable as many students as possible to join the class and benefit from the online lecture. This group of participants believe that one crucial purpose that teaching translation online serves is to save and protect teachers and students from COVID-19 through applying social distancing and imposing distance learning. Finally, from the financial point of view, teaching translation online saves government money.
Concerning the drawbacks pointed out by the participants, one group of participants believe that teaching translation online may lead to a situation where the teacher is unable to monitor and control students during the translation process. This springs from the fact that the teacher cannot interact with students face-to-face. This, the group in question assume, would decrease the level of willingness for teaching. Also, several students seem uninterested in studying and interacting and become absent-minded during the online courses, which is unlikely to be the case in typical courses. Moreover, the element of punctuality does not seem to be adhered to by many students, which causes delays at the start of the lecture.

Another group of participants believe that teaching translation online may lead to a situation where it is difficult to see who is behind the screen, especially if the student has turned off the camera. Consequently, you may feel at different times that you are talking to yourself or the screen. At the start of this pandemic, both teachers and students were unprepared to use online teaching and technology. Exam management is problematic unless the teachers give projects or essays to their students. There is an evident lack of interaction from students. Group work and class discussion are not as effective and efficient as in typical classes. What is more, differences in time zones and connectivity may affect the smoothness of classes.

The third group of participants see that teaching translation online does not secure and ensure fair exam assessment. Indeed, students can easily cheat in translating, either by asking the best students to send them their translation or through machine translation. Teachers need to spend more time discussing and commenting on students’ translations. Group work cannot be adequately organized as in typical courses. Each student’s feedback needs to be explained in detail; however, the limited time for online courses and the weak internet connection, have not enabled teachers to give detailed feedback to their students. Furthermore, some universities have increased their capacity for student admission and registration as the classes are virtual, which has affected the level of students’ engagement in the class discussion.

The fourth group of participants point out that teaching translation online is disadvantageous; internet connection issues and audio problems have prevailed. In addition, identifying weak students has become quite tricky due to the poor interaction by all the students generally. Also, some teachers who used to give written tests in translating are no longer able to do so and suffice with multiple questions tests, which are not as rigorous as the written ones, which would affect the quality of students’ translation assessment. The group of participants concerned have also stated that virtual classes lack motivation, which may result in less participation and interaction from the side of students.

Responding to the fifth question of the current questionnaire, the majority of the participants who have taken part in the questionnaire concerned have experienced significant obstacles in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak and have also provided suggested solutions for resolving the challenges in question. Another group of participants have only stated major obstacles in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak without offering any solutions. The last group of participants do not see any significant obstacles in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak.
Considering the participants who have experienced major obstacles in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak and have provided suggested solutions, one group of them hold the view that they have shared weak connection when using the internet, but have offered the recording of the online sessions so that students can listen to the recording whenever they want. They have also believed that with the several internet problems, a particular network should be established only for the sake of distance learning.

Another obstacle pointed out by this group is the insufficient familiarity of both teachers and students with distance learning. One solution they have suggested to resolve this problem is to provide both teachers and students with intensive online training courses to enhance their abilities to cope with technical issues. The group in question have also encountered a lack of interaction from the side of students. They have suggested that there must be clear instructions made by teachers and sent to students every week, explaining the importance of students’ interaction.

They claim that group work and open discussions are different and are not as efficient as in regular classes. However, they propose that a discussion forum should be activated. Moreover, extra support along with advice from teachers should also be given. The group have further suggested that students need to be provided with regular feedback on formative assessment and should be given after finalizing a particular section summative assessment. This is backed by Akmaliyah, Karman, Rosyid Ridho, and Khomisah (2020), who believe that feedback is crucial as it helps students evaluate their work in a better way. Within the same line of thought, Masantiah, Pasiphol, and Tangdhanakanond (2020) assert that feedback is deemed amongst the optimum ways to strengthen students’ evaluation accuracy. The learning objectives and outcomes should be modified with the release of the relevant materials in advance.

Another group of participants have encountered obstacles when organizing both individual translation projects as well as group translation projects. They suggest resolving such problems by making use of a specific electronic platform known as ‘Trello’, which they claim is beneficial. This group of participants have also faced technical issues, connection dropouts as well as students’ weaknesses in dealing with various types of technologies. They have suggested for resolving such issues the presence of excellent and reliable IT support, using a particular cable for the sake of internet connection rather than a Wi-Fi and providing students with training courses to strengthen their abilities to deal with technologies.

The third group of participants confront the problem of having many students in a single class, particularly in practical translation courses. They propose reducing the number of students in classes, especially those that involve practical translation exercises. This is to give a chance to as many students as possible to read their translations, justify their choices of vocabulary, and comment on the translations of their classmates. Also, for the sake of enhancing student participation, they suggest the use of the forum option in the electronic platform to give students more opportunities to be involved in the class discussion. Another obstacle stated by this group is the ascertainment of whether or not students themselves do class activities with no help. They suggest the use of a breakup room on ‘Zoom’ to resolve this problem. The last obstacle encountered by this group is the repeated technical issues students face in accessing both the online classes and the online exams. They propose flexibility in the attendance policy, extending
deadlines several times, and allowing students to take exams multiple times. This is in line with Anderson (2004), who contends that online teaching should involve affordability, accessibility, flexibility, and life-long learning.

Concerning the participants who have only stated the significant obstacles they have encountered in teaching translation during the COVID-19 outbreak without providing any suggested solutions, one group of them have said that one of the obstacles they have faced is that certain materials need to be discussed in regular classes. They claim that teaching translation online does not enable teachers to know whether or not students are present and have understood what has been said in the lecture. Another group of participants point out that amongst the major obstacles are a poor internet connection, audio issues, students’ lack of internet services, and unfamiliarity of students with the use of technological equipment. They go on to argue that there are other significant obstacles encountered in teaching translation online, which mainly lie in students’ different disciplines, the difference in their ages, behaviors as well as morals. They agree with the previous group on the obstacle teachers face concerning the ascertainment of whether or not students themselves understand what has been said in the lecture and do their homework on their own without assistance. Another obstacle stressed by this group is the absence of some students from classes, pretending that they could not access the platform. The third group of participants assert that significant obstacles in teaching translation online hinge chiefly upon the bandwidth.

Concerning the participants who hold the view that there are no significant obstacles faced in teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak, one group of them have pointed out that teaching translation online has no significant obstacles encountered during the online teaching process. Another group of participants believe that nothing is deemed a significant obstacle in online translation teaching. They continue to argue that the phrase: ‘major obstacle’ is misused in online translation teaching, explaining that teaching translation online is an excellent experience and is void of obstacles.

As an answer to the sixth question of the questionnaire under study, table five shows that 40% of the participants who have taken part in the current questionnaire evaluate their online translation teaching experience during the COVID-19 outbreak as enjoyable and exhilarating. About 23.33% of the participants who have filled in the questionnaire concerned consider their online translation teaching experience very good. Also, 23.33% of the participants consider their online translation teaching experience good to some extent, whereas 13.33% of the participants evaluate their online translation teaching experience as good. No participant has assessed their online translation teaching experience as not good, nor has any participant considered such experience terrible.

Analyzing the answers to the last question of the questionnaire concerned, all the participants who have taken part in the current questionnaire under study have proposed different methods and approaches through which teaching translation online can be improved. One group of participants believe that online translation teaching may be improved if the number of students in each virtual classroom is reduced. It can further be enhanced if both teachers and students are well trained in using different types of technology, including CAT tools. Another group of participants believe that online translation teaching can be improved by adding a particular
technological feature in the electronic platform that enables teachers to observe and monitor students’ translation tasks performed during the virtual classroom. Certain online services may be employed to serve such a purpose, such as Google Docs, on condition that the number of students in the virtual classroom concerned is limited. The third group of participants think that practice makes perfect. One participant of them states: “the more we teach online, the more innovative we will become in online teaching. Seminars, webinars, and workshops will help us improve our skills. Sharing best practices among teachers is also useful.”

Another group of participants believe that online translation teaching can be improved if the learning objectives and outcomes of the online courses are changed and modified to fit the current situation and live up to the expectations of the students. The group in question also point out that one crucial factor that develops online translation teaching in general is to incorporate online materials within the syllabuses of the regular classes and make them accessible. The fifth group of participants believe that the optimum method for translation pedagogy is the simulation of the work environment. This means that students should be wholly provided with all the electronic resources, as translators who translate for the job market, such as access to different monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, machine translation as well as translation memories. The group in question also assert that online translation teaching can be improved through engaging students in electronic sessions and making them involved in peer review translation work. They further add that constant online translation teaching, learning, and communication between teachers and students through several online methods play an undeniably substantial role in online translation teaching development.

The sixth group of participants assert that online translation teaching can be improved by way of amending the taught materials and method of assessment to be suitable and appropriate for online teaching and distance learning. They claim that education policy-makers should set clear roadmaps for designing courses that entirely fit online teaching. What is more, the quality of electronic learning platforms used in online translation teaching needs to be improved, and the value of online and distance learning should be fostered. Furthermore, student interaction within the electronic platforms should be promoted. A different group of participants see that there should be an electronic trusted body approved worldwide and used for online translation teaching. This would unify the online platform and make it accessible to all online users. The group concerned also recommend using a camera by both teachers and students to create an atmosphere similar to that of the regular classes. In addition, the notion of cooperation between teachers and students to promote the online teaching and learning process is of paramount importance. The group in question argue over the merit of the notion of preparing graphic and video tools.

Conclusion

The present paper has addressed translation teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak. It has delved into the obstacles encountered in online translation teaching and has concurrently probed into specific proposed solutions to surmount such obstacles. The paper has arrived at essential findings represented by the fact that 40% of the participants evaluate their online translation teaching experience during the COVID-19 outbreak as enjoyable and exhilarating. In contrast, no participant has considered their online translation teaching experience not good or even terrible. The paper also concludes that most of the participants have encountered obstacles in teaching
translation during the COVID-19 outbreak and have suggested solutions in concert to surmount them. Amongst the obstacles reflected by the data is the weak connection when using the internet, which can be resolved by recording the online lectures and establishing a specific network to be used only for distance learning. Another obstacle is the insufficient knowledge of both teachers and students concerning distance learning, which can be overcome by providing both teachers and students with intensive online translation teaching/learning training courses. Participants have also experienced problems concerning the lack of students’ interaction. They have suggested that there must be specific instructions made by teachers and sent to students every week, explaining the importance of students’ interaction. Another obstacle is that group work and open discussion are different and are not as effective as in regular classes. Such a problem may be solved by activating the discussion forum, giving extra support and advice from teachers. Also, students should be given regular feedback on formative assessment and should be given after finalizing each section summative assessment. The learning objectives and outcomes should be modified with the release of the appropriate materials in advance. Another critical challenge faced by the participants resides chiefly in the way in which individual and group translation projects are organized. They propose using a specific electronic platform known as: ‘Trello’ insofar as it is largely helpful in this respect. Technical issues and connection dropouts have also formed real obstacles surmounted by depending on reliable IT support alongside using particular cables for internet connection instead of Wi-Fi. The large number of students in practical translation classes is another challenge the participants face, which can be overcome by reducing the number of students in each practical translation class and activating the forum option in the electronic platform for further class discussion. The ascertainment of whether or not students themselves do class activities with no assistance is another obstacle encountered by participants. They propose the use of a breakup room on ‘Zoom’ to resolve such an issue. The repeated technical problems faced by students in accessing both online classes and exams have also formed real problems. Participants have suggested having flexibility in attendance policy, extending deadlines several times, and making online exams available multiple times.

Acknowledgments
This project was funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research (DSR) at King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, under grant No. (G: 22-125-1442). The author, therefore, acknowledges with thanks DSR for technical and financial support.

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Kurdish EFL Learners’ Perceptions towards Written Corrective Feedback and Its Types: An Investigative Study

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Received: 8/10/2021  Accepted: 10/12/2021  Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Written Corrective Feedback has been one of the most controversial topics (Waller, 2015), and it has been researched extensively. Still, the lack of research among Kurdish EFL learners made it necessary to conduct the current research. This study focuses on investigating learners' perceptions of written corrective feedback and its types. It attempts to answer what the Kurdish EFL learners’ perceptions of written corrective feedback are, and what types of written corrective feedback among Kurdish Learners are preferred. Answering these questions is significant as the results can be used by both teachers and learners to improve learners’ writing accuracy. A survey questionnaire was distributed to collect data. After analyzing data, the results reveal that most Kurdish EFL participants were not fully aware of WCF and its effectiveness as a learning tool. However, they still expected their writing teachers to provide them with WCF in writing tasks. Also, the results indicate that Kurdish EFL learners preferred two types of WCF: explicit and implicit WCF. Hence, the results have many pedagogical implications for writing teachers and learners. Firstly, it shows how EFL learners from other countries and contexts perceive WCF, and secondly, results encourage writing teachers to give more attention and value to WCF.

Keywords: Kurdish EFL Learners, learner’s perceptions, written corrective feedback, foreign context, learning tools, university students

Cite as: Mahmood, R. Q. (2021). Kurdish EFL Learners’ Perceptions towards Written Corrective Feedback and Its Types: An Investigative Study. Arab World English Journal, 12 (4) 103- 117. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.7
Introduction

Learning any language can be challenging because learners have to attempt to master the four major micro-skills (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Thus, both teachers and learners must give adequate attention and importance to all the language skills. Research has shown that one of the most challenging and complicated skills of a target language is writing skills (Alimohammadi & Nejadansari, 2014; Farag, 2014). Writing teachers have been trying to utilize effective strategies to improve their students’ writing skills and accuracy. Hence, one of these strategies is the provision of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF). Researchers have defined WCF in a variety of ways. For instance, Bitchener and Storch (2016) state that “written CF is a written response to a linguistic error [and it] seeks to either correct the incorrect usage or provide information about [the error]” (p. 1). Lightbown and Spada (2013) defined Corrective Feedback (CF) as “an indication to the learners that his or her use of the target language is incorrect” (p. 216). Furthermore, Li (2010) described CF as in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as “the responses to a learner’s non-target-like L2 production” (p. 309).

Even though results from previous studies have shown that teachers have been trying to find practical tools to help their learners improve in writing classes, EFL/ESL learners are still facing many problems doing writing tasks (Styati & Rodliyah, 2021). A strategy that always has a unique position in the field of SLA is WCF because previous research has shown that WCF can enhance learners’ writing skills and accuracy as learners have been facing difficulties in mastering writing skills (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008).

WCF has been one of the most debatable and controversial topics in the field of SLA and among writing teachers in the last four decades. Yet, the usefulness of WCF cannot be nullified, nor can it be verified. In this regard, researchers have been divided into two groups: those in favor of WCF, and the other group is against the provision of WCF. For example, the results of a study by Bitchener and Knoch (2010) show that WCF plays a vital role in improving learners’ writing accuracy. Furthermore, Ferris (1995) has evidenced that learners appreciated their teachers’ feedback, and they believed that WCF is useful in helping learners to improve their writing skills. Truscott (1996), on the other hand, states that “Grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned” (p. 1). In addition to that, several studies by Cohen and Robbins (1976) and Krashen (1992) have concluded that correcting learners’ grammar errors are ineffective for two reasons: first, learners may not check the feedback they receive, and second, if they do, they cannot point out to a comment that helps them correct the error identified. As discussed in the introduction, WCF has been the attention point of both teachers and researchers in the field of SLA, and thus, it is necessary to investigate and conduct more research on this topic. Hence, the current study was pushed out from the ocean of WCF, which cannot be verified by the available literature; therefore, more and more research needs to be conducted to investigate this issue from different contexts and with diverse ESL/EFL learners.

Although much research has been conducted to explore WCF in ESL/EFL contexts, very little research has been undertaken among Kurdish EFL learners. Therefore, to provide more effective second language (L2) teaching writing classes, it is crucial to understand learners’ perceptions of WCF and its types. Hence, the current research aims at addressing the following questions:
1. What are the perceptions of Kurdish EFL learners towards WCF?
2. What are the perceptions of Kurdish EFL learners of WCF types?
3. Do Kurdish EFL learners use/see WCF as a learning tool to improve their writing accuracy?

**Literature Review**
This research examined the perceptions of Kurdish EFL learners of WCF and its types. It also investigated what EFL learners have to say on writing skills and receiving CF from their writing teachers.

Written corrective feedback is widely used as a learning tool to improve and develop Second Language (L2) writing skills (Boggs, 2019; Cheng & Zhang, 2021; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2019). On that basis, the importance and the value of WCF have been examined continuously by researchers (Atmaca, 2016). In the studies that have been done, it is still debatable what roles WCF plays in language classrooms. In the literature section, the types, the usefulness, and the results of previous studies were reviewed and discussed in more detail.

**Types of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)**
In writing classes, teachers tend to give different types of WCF, and several kinds of WCF have been studied and investigated, such as direct, indirect, comprehensive, and selective WCF.

*Direct versus Indirect WCF*
Teachers and researchers have been asking the question that whether direct or indirect WCF is more effective for learners. In that regard, both direct and indirect WCF has been defined differently. For instance, Ferris (2003) explained direct corrective feedback and stated that when the teachers provide the correct linguistic form or the correct language structure to the learners’ linguistic error is called direct corrective feedback. The provided correction might be related to grammar rules, spelling mistakes, unnecessary punctuation marks, using unappropriated words or phrases.

On the contrary, indirect corrective feedback is when the teacher indicates where the learners have made a mistake without correcting or giving them the correct form of the error (Ferris, 2003). In this case, the teacher might use some symbols or indications to draw the learners’ attention to realize that they have made an error in their writing work. Teachers use several common symbols and codes for giving indirect CF, such as (VT: verb tense, Sp. Spelling, WW: wrong word) (Ellis, 2008).

*Comprehensive versus Selective WCF*
Another type of CF is called comprehensive WCF. For this type, the teacher provides corrective feedback to all the errors that the student has made. This type of feedback has been implemented a lot among ESL/EFL teachers because they think that students have to avoid making mistakes, and giving feedback has to be a tool for their writing skills improvement (Ferris, Hyland, & Hyland., 2006; Lee, 2004; 2008). This type of corrective feedback is seen as a challenging task for the teacher because they have to mark all the learners’ writing errors, and the problem is more difficult if there are too many learners in one class (Ferris, 2011).
contrast, selective WCF is also called focused. As the name denotes that meaning, the teacher focuses on certain or selected errors and gives corrective feedback to the learners’ writing task. This type of feedback has been researched a lot, and it has been seen as an effective strategy to improve learners’ writing accuracy (Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009).

**ESL/EFL Learners’ Perceptions of WCF**

Reviewing the existing literature on WCF, two worth noticing viewpoints have been detected among WCF researchers. First, a group of researchers (e.g., Abdollahifam, 2014; Bitchener, 2012; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Beuningen, Jong, & Kuiken, 2011; Chung, 2015; Ellis et al., 2008; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Kim & Emeliyanova, 2019; Lee, 2019) believed that WCF plays an essential role in improving learners’ writing skills and accuracy. For instance, Bitchener (2012) stated that “CF is able to effect improved control over the targeted struct” (p.856). But this research focuses on the perceptions of learners towards WCF. Another group of researchers (e.g., Liu, 2008; Semke, 1984; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) are against providing WCF. These researchers believed that WCF is more harmful than helping improve learners’ writing accuracy. Thus, reviewing the available literature on this matter is crucial.

To a great extent, writing instructors give WCF to their learners to show them what kind of errors they made, and how to correct them. It is crucial to know learners’ perceptions about their teachers’ feedback because understanding them can help teachers give more effective types of WCF. Studies that have been conducted on learners’ perceptions conclude that L2 learners realize the importance of the feedback they receive—that it is one of their ways to improve their writing abilities—and they like their teachers’ feedback (Abdollahifam, 2014). Learners in EFL/ESL contexts expect some kind of corrective feedback from their teachers. For instance, Atmaca (2016) found that Turkish EFL learners indicated that WCF is a learning tool that improves their writing abilities. Teachers should help learners to find their errors because if the teacher does not mark any mistakes, the learners think they did not make any errors. Furthermore, Leki (1991) found that learners expect their writing teachers to correct all the errors in their writing assignments. In contrast, some other learners mentioned that the teachers should not interfere with errors; instead, they have to guide the learners in finding the errors they make. Those learners who preferred only guidance in error discovery believed that this way helps them to be more independent and more autonomous when they correct their errors (Atmaca, 2016). A study by Mackey et al. (2007) about the learners’ perceptions concluded that learners understand the importance of WCF, and they believed that teachers’ intervention helps learners to improve their writing accuracy, especially the learners’ lexical and grammatical accuracy. Both ESL/EFL learners showed a strong preference for their teachers’ comments (Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1994). Furthermore, in a study, 77% of the learners agreed that when they write an assignment, they try to write to the best of their abilities so that the feedback is directed to their most advanced level of writing (Diab, 2005).

The English language has been one of the main subjects at various educational institutions in Middle Eastern countries such as Iran or Iraq. Still, there has not been much research about EFL learners in these countries, especially in Iraq. The perceptions of learners to the teacher’s feedback are unknown. For example, the only study that the researcher could identify was Rahimi's (2010) on Iranian learners’ preferences for receiving error feedback and
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their beliefs about teachers’ strategies in giving feedback. The study showed that 54% of the participants reported that WCF would help them be more proficient in their writing skills. In addition to the participants’ perceptions of WCF, they also noted that learners have varying preferences towards the types of WCF from their teachers. Some learners would prefer explicit feedback because they consider it very challenging to find their errors and correct them.

To summarize, WCF has been examined in different teaching contexts, such as EFL and ESL classes. Researchers have been divided into two groups. Some researchers, such as Truscott (1996), claimed that WCF does not help learners improve their writing abilities, even warning that it might be harmful to them. In contrast, other researchers like Ferris and Roberts (2001) argued that WCF is a valuable tool for learning development. Despite two opposing claims about WCF and its values, a lot more researchers have been attracted to the subject matter from different countries with different English language learners, and a lot of research has been addressed this issue. However, the researcher could not identify any studies about the perceptions of Kurdish EFL learners of WCF and how they react towards its types regarding its effectiveness in developing writing ability.

Consequently, it can be concluded that more study was/is still necessary to be conducted with learners from different contexts. Therefore, the current research has been carried out among Kurdish EFL learners in Iraqi Kurdistan. In this context (i.e., Iraqi Kurdistan), learners have been taught English for more than four decades. They received their bachelor’s degree in the English language, yet, not much has been written on WCF among Kurdish EFL learners. Therefore, the value of this research is countless as it is one of the first studies that has been conducted with Kurdish EFL students, and it is important to investigate the effectiveness of WCF in different ESL/EFL contexts to validate the existing results of other studies.

Methods

To achieve the purpose of the current study, the researcher administered a survey questionnaire to collect data. The primary reason to adopt this method was to understand and investigate the participants’ perceptions of WCF and its types. The researcher believed that using a survey questionnaire could achieve the goal because the participants’ responded to the survey anonymously.

Participants and Context

The context where this research was conducted was at Salahaddin University, College of Education, English Department. English has been taught for more than two decades (i.e., since 1998) at this department as a foreign language. Learners at this university study the English language for four years to obtain their bachelor’s degree. The main reason to choose this context is that writing courses are one of the main core courses at the curriculum, and not much research has been done in this context with Kurdish EFL learners.

The participants for this study were chosen from two different contexts: ten college ESL learners at California State University, Northridge-USA, and 50 Kurdish learners in Iraqi Kurdistan at the Salahaddin University, College of Education, English Department. The researcher used a random sampling method to choose the participants. Overall, 60 learners participated in a survey questionnaire to collect data for this study. The learners (32 females and
28 males) were learning English as a second/foreign language. They were from different backgrounds and nationalities. Their proficiency level was varied between intermediate to low-advanced. The learners’ ages ranged from 18 to 25 years old. The mean age was 20 years old. The participants participated in this study willingly. The Kurdish EFL participants were chosen from two different years: the first year and the second year (i.e., the undergraduate study is in four years). There were two main reasons for this type of selection. First, learners from the first year are fresh to the university environment, and they take basic writing courses to learn how to write English sentences to paragraphs academically. Thus, it is crucial to investigate how much first-year learners know and use WCF to improve their writing skills. On the other hand, learners in the second year have already learned the introductory of writing skills, and the second year is when they have to learn the other complex structures of writing tasks.

Research Instruments
A survey questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. It had two parts: the first part consisted of ten statements (Appendix A), and both Kurdish EFL and ESL participants rated the statements, and the second part of the questionnaire (Appendix B), which also consisted of ten additional statements, mainly focused on the types of WCF and was rated only by the Kurdish EFL learners. The primary focus of the statements was on the learners’ perceptions toward WCF and its types. The questionnaire statements used in this study were adapted from previous studies by these researchers (Atmaca, 2016; Diab, 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Waller & Papi, 2017). Some of the statements were modified and adapted for this study to be more appropriate for the participants. For both parts of the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) was used for all. Participants were asked to rate from 1 to 5 on the survey questionnaire.

Data Collection
As mentioned before, the participants were in the first and second year of their undergraduate studies, and they had been studying English and taking writing classes for one/two years. For the data collection process, the participants were given the survey. They had been given enough time to read and complete the survey carefully to collect reliable and valid data. After completing the survey, the collected data were entered and prepared to be analyzed.

To analyze the collected data, Descriptive statistics were performed using SPSS version 21.0. The reason for performing descriptive statistics is because the research questions can be investigated and analyzed using this type of performance.

Findings
After data analysis and based on the items in the survey questionnaire, three main constructs were illustrated and extracted from the statements in the survey: 1) Reactions to WCF, 2) Understanding of WCF as a Learning Tool, and 3) Digestion of WCF.

Reactions to WCF
In this construct, the learners’ reactions towards WCF have been investigated. As presented in Table one, the first section included three questionnaire statements (see Appendix A) highlighting learners’ reactions to WCF, hence named Reactions to WCF. After the collected data was analyzed, values of the mean and standard deviation scores were used to provide the results. Based on the results in Table one, Kurdish EFL learners have different reactions to WCF.
The EFL learners’ varying responses (i.e., dispersion within the group) are drawn from greater SD values (SD: 1.25). Lower mean values simply indicate the group’s (EFL learners) less active reaction to WCF than the other group (ESL learners). In contrast, the ESL learners showed more consistent responses to these statements, and more positively reacted to WCF, and this can be calculated based on the high mean score of (4.50) out of (5.00) with the lowest standard deviation of (0.32) for statements seven (see Appendix A). The difference between the mean scores indicates that Kurdish EFL learners do not have a clear understanding of why they receive WCF from their teachers. The reason might be that neither all EFL teachers provide WCF nor are all learners aware of the importance of WCF to improve their writing abilities (Farag, 2014). Therefore, it can be drawn from the results that Kurdish EFL learners have not been taught about the usefulness of WCF, and some of them might not have heard what WCF is from their teachers.

### Table 1. Descriptive statistics of Kurdish EFL and ESL participants’ responses to the questionnaire statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reactions to WCF</th>
<th>Kurdish EFL Learners</th>
<th>ESL Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.30 (0.82)</td>
<td>4.50 (0.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.30 (1.25)</td>
<td>1.30 (0.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.80 (0.92)</td>
<td>1.10 (0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding of WCF as a learning tool</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.00 (1.05)</td>
<td>5.00 (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.10 (0.88)</td>
<td>4.70 (0.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.40 (1.35)</td>
<td>1.70 (1.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.90 (1.52)</td>
<td>1.80 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digestion of feedback</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.30 (1.06)</td>
<td>1.50 (0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.20 (0.92)</td>
<td>4.40 (0.84)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Understanding WCF as a Learning Tool**

The second section in Table one included four questionnaire statements highlighting learners’ understanding of WCF, hence named *Understanding WCF as a Learning Tool*. This construct has been extracted from the survey questionnaire items to gain a better understanding of how Kurdish EFL learners understand WCF, and it investigates if Kurdish EFL learners know much about WCF as a learning tool or not. In these statements (see Appendix A), the participants were asked to rate if they used WCF to improve their writing abilities and avoid making the same errors. It is evident from the difference in the mean values of both EFL (4.10) and ESL learners (4.70) that ESL learners found WCF as a more powerful learning tool. However, learners in both contexts used WCF to improve their writing skills, but Kurdish EFL learners showed less consistent responses to the statements, and this result is based on different SD values such as high values of (1.05) to (1.52). On the other hand, the ESL learner participants had a better understanding of WCF as a learning tool, with their lower SD values of (0.00) to (1.32) showing positive reflection and consistent responses to the questionnaire statements.
These results support the results of previous research (Faraj, 2015). In her study with Kurdish EFL learners, she found that only 48% of learners can write appropriate vocabulary with correct spelling and word forms to produce effective written work without WCF from their teachers.

**Digestion of WCF**

Finally, the researcher has attempted to investigate either Kurdish EFL learners benefit and accept their teachers’ WCF or not. In this regard, the third construct has been extracted from two questionnaire statements that highlighted how both EFL and ESL learners digest WCF. Both groups of participants were asked to rate (1= Never) and (5= Always) for each statement. The statements in the questionnaire were “I like when my teacher only writes a grade and does not comment on my paper”; “When I do not understand my teacher's comments, I talk to them.” The results show a slight difference among EFL and ESL learners of how well they digest WCF. For example, for statement nine (see Appendix A) in Table one, both the experimental and control groups scored similar high mean scores of (M= 4.20) for EFL learners, and (M= 4.40) for ESL learners with a very low standard deviation score of less than (SD= 1.00). Surprisingly, there was not a single ESL learner that would say they always liked to see the assignment grade by itself on the paper without any feedback on statement five. Still, a few Kurdish EFL learners rated in favor of this statement which says, “I like when my teacher only writes a grade and not comment on my paper,” and this difference clearly can be observed when the mean scores of both EFL and ESL participants are being compared, which are (M= 2.30) and (M= 1.50) for both group learners respectively.

**Preferred Types of WCF by Kurdish EFL Learners**

As reviewed in the previous sections, different types of WCF have been investigated and utilized by both teachers and researchers. In this section, the researcher has attempted to understand and explore what types of WCF are preferred among Kurdish EFL learners, and this section has been formed based on one of the main research questions. To examine one of the main research questions (i.e., what type of WCF Kurdish EFL learners prefer?), the Kurdish EFL participants rated ten additional statements which targeted the preferred types (i.e., explicit or implicit) of WCF from the perspective of Kurdish learners (see Appendix B). The collected data has been analyzed in Table two as the following:

Table two consists of two main sections: the first section presents the mean scores and standard deviations toward explicit WCF (i.e., correcting all vs. selectively). The participants were asked to rate on the Likert Scale (i.e., 1= Never to 5= Always) how much they agree or disagree with each statement. For example, some of the statements in the first section of the survey were “The teacher should mark and correct all errors because it is useful to learn the correct items”; “The teacher should comment on and correct my vocabulary, grammatical errors, and sentence structures”; “The teacher should underline the error and correct it.”

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Kurdish EFL participants’ responses to 10 additional questionnaire statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit WCF</th>
<th>Kurdish EFL Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.70 (1.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.70 (0.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.30 (1.42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the analyzed data, surprisingly, participants scored differently, and they were not very consistent whether they preferred explicit WCF or implicit WCF. This result is drawn from the different scores of mean values and standard deviations. For instance, all the statements in the first part of Table two targeted explicit feedback specifically statement three and eight. For example, the lowest mean score is (M= 2.70) for statement three, “The teacher should comment on and correct my vocabulary, grammatical errors, and sentence structures,” and the highest mean value was (M= 2.80) for statement eight (i.e., The teacher should underline the error and correct it) with a standard deviation of (SD= 0.63). In addition, the statements in the first section of Table two also ask the learners to show their preferences about how comprehensive teachers have to correct the learners’ errors. The results indicate that Kurdish learners preferred that selective errors have to be corrected by their teachers (i.e., vocabulary, grammatical errors, and sentence structures). This conclusion is based on the low SD value of (0.82) for statement three (i.e., The teacher should comment on and correct my vocabulary, grammatical errors, and sentence structures), and (SD= 1.06) for statement one (The teacher should mark and correct all errors because it is useful to learn the correct items).

On the other hand, the second section of Table two shows how much Kurdish EFL learners preferred implicit WCF. In these statements, learners were asked to rate their perceptions whether they agree or disagree with these statements. For example, some of the statements were “The teacher has to mark all significant errors but not minor ones”; “The teacher should show only where the error is with no correction”; “The teacher should mark only errors that interfere with communicating ideas.” Once again, a very high mean score of (M= 4.30) shows a strong agreement that Kurdish EFL learners profoundly believed that implicit WCF could help them improve their errors, and they did not like their teachers’ intervention to give WCF for every error they made.

The above findings show that individual preferences for the types of WCF among both EFL and ESL learners exist in different contexts and countries. Thus, these results confirm the findings of some previous studies (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Chandler, 2003; Chung, 2015). In these studies, the results show that implicit WCF helps learners correct their errors by themselves. One of the significant findings of this study is that the Kurdish EFL learners have shown variances in their perceptions and beliefs towards WCF and its types. The evidence is the inconsistent distributions of the mean and standard deviation values in Table one and Table two. To utilize WCF more effectively, individual differences among the learners have to be taken into consideration. Teachers have to dedicate adequate time to provide WCF. Also, it can be noticed that Kurdish EFL learners are similar to other learners in benefiting from WCF, and they expect and appreciate error feedback from their teachers. To find out why Kurdish EFL learners were
not consistent about the types of WCF (i.e., explicit or implicit), the reason might be the lack of knowledge on WCF and its types among Kurdish EFL learners, and this is also related to the teachers who teach writing classes in the Kurdish EFL context.

Discussion

The findings suggest that written corrective feedback the perceptions of ESL learners are different than EFL learners in terms of using it as one of the effective learning tools. Although EFL learners showed the value of WCF, they were not consistent in their perceptions towards it. Still, it is worth mentioning that both groups of participants from ESL/EFL contexts expected to receive CF from their teachers because they believed that with the provision of WCF, they would be able to improve their writing accuracy. This finding has also been confirmed with the conclusions in the study by Bitchener and Knoch (2010).

Although most writing teachers provide WCF and mark their learners’ errors, some learners prefer to have only the writing task grade with no correction comments. This phenomenon was also observed among the Kurdish EFL learners in the current study. It is crucial to investigate this observation more because the purpose of giving WCF is to help learners to improve their writing abilities, not discourage them upon receiving WCF.

Regarding the types of WCF, there were a variety of perceptions. For instance, some participants preferred explicit WCF, and some others preferred implicit WCF. This was also true with the ESL learners. Based on the participants’ responses, this variety of preferences was that some learners wanted to see the correct form from their teachers. These findings aligned with the conclusions of the study by Bozorgian and Yazdani (2021).

Conclusion

Although written corrective feedback has been researched extensively in both ESL/EFL contexts, yet very little research is available in a foreign context (i.e., Kurdish context). This lack of literature with Kurdish EFL learners indicates that corrective feedback is not investigated, and it is overlooked. As previous studies show that WCF has been found as an effective tool to improve learners’ writing abilities and accuracy, it is necessary to examine it in a context where the English language has been taught for more than 20 years. Thus, the current study attempted to investigate Kurdish EFL learners’ perceptions of WCF and its types. This study provides several insights into a sample of Kurdish university EFL learners’ perceptions towards WCF as an effective learning tool. The results show that the participants were not fully aware of the usefulness of WCF for improving learners’ writing accuracy. Still, on the whole, the learner participants believed that WCF is expected to be given by their teachers. Regarding utilizing WCF as a learning tool, the EFL Kurdish participants were inconsistent in their responses (SD=1.05 to 1.52). Conversely, the ESL participants have had a better understanding of WCF as a learning tool. Another crucial finding was that Kurdish EFL learners had a variety of preferences towards the types of WCF. For instance, some participants thought that explicit WCF is more effective, and others believed that implicit WCF and the reasons were not clear; therefore, more research is needed to be conducted in that regard.

This study confirms that Kurdish EFL learners expect to receive WCF from their teachers. Thus, in the Kurdish context, writing teachers have to give more importance to this
strategy to help their learners improve their writing accuracy. By conducting this study, it is expected that the results encourage researchers to investigate other writing issues among Kurdish EFL learners. It is also hoped that the results provide better solutions to increase the quality of education in Iraqi Kurdistan.

About the author:
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References


Appendices

**Kurdish EFL Learners’ Perceptions towards Written Corrective Feedback and Its Types: An Investigative Study**

I would like to ask you to help us by answering the following questions concerning foreign language learning. This survey questionnaire has been designed about “Kurdish EFL Learners’ Perceptions towards Written Corrective Feedback and Its Types: An Investigative Study” to get a better understanding of the mentioned issue. The researcher is interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely, as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. You have to rate the given statement based on the provided scale, which is:

Never (NV) (1), Seldom (SEL) (2), Sometimes (SMT) (3), Often (OFT), and Always (ALS) (5)

**Appendix A**

**Kurdish EFL Learners’ Perceptions towards Written Corrective Feedback**

Table 3. *Statements show general information and the learners’ perception of WCF and indicate it as an effective learning tool*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I like when my teacher corrects all of my mistakes (grammar,</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content, organization, spelling, punctuation).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When I get my papers back, I read all of the comments carefully</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Written corrective feedback from my teacher helps me be a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better writer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I remember the mistakes my teacher points out to me, and I try</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not to make them again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I like when my teacher only writes a grade and does not</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments on my paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When I do not understand my teacher's comments, I ignore them.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I do not care about receiving feedback on my papers.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I would like to be told only what I did right in my paper.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. When I do not understand my teacher's comments, I talk to them.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. When I get my papers back, I only look at the grade.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Kurdish EFL Learners’ Perceptions towards Preferred Types of Written Corrective Feedback

*Never (NV) (1), Seldom (SEL) (2), Sometimes (SMT) (3), Often (OFT), and Always (ALS) (5)*

Table 4. *Statements show the types (i.e., explicit and implicit) of WCF which are given to the learners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should mark and correct all errors because it is useful to learn the correct items.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher has to mark all significant errors but not minor ones.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should comment on and correct my vocabulary, grammatical errors, and sentence structures.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should mark only errors that interfere with communicating ideas.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should not mark any errors; respond only to ideas and content.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should circle/underline and use a code to indicate the type of error.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should underline the error and correct it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should show where the error is and give a clue about how to correct it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should show only where the error is with no correction.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arabic English Code Switching among Saudi Speakers

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Received: 7/17/2021 Accepted: 10/5/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Many studies have been conducted on code-switching worldwide, but few were carried out on Saudi context. Therefore, this study inquires the use of code-switching among Saudis who speak both Arabic and English to identify the reasons of code-switching and to know the significant differences regarding gender, age, qualification, and level of English. The study raises two questions. They are: 1) What are the reasons of code-switching of Saudis as native speakers of Arabic? And 2) Are there significant differences for code-switching of Saudis as native speakers of Arabic due to gender, age, qualification, and level of English? A descriptive-analytical approach has been adopted, and SPSS program is used. A questionnaire (30 items) was distributed to a sample of 426 Saudis. Findings showed that those with high-level proficiency combined Arabic and English languages more due to their awareness of English language expressions and found English vocabulary more expressive and delivered their ideas better. Moreover, working people used code-switching extensively. Furthermore, postgraduates were found to be better than others. Additionally, genders were both exposed to the same circumstances. Finally, individuals among all age groups combined both Arabic and English languages due perhaps to several reasons. Therefore, the researcher recommends that it might be better to study the significance of forming training courses to keep the interest of natives to take pride and use it in all aspects of life. Finally, the researcher suggests conducting another study on investigating code-switching among instructors in EFL classrooms and exploring code-mixing since there are few studies.

Keywords: Code-switching, English studies, Linguistics, Saudis native speakers, sociolinguistics

Introduction

English has become an essential and pervasive language in Saudi Arabia. Though the English language is not being introduced until schools in Saudi Arabia are copious throughout the country. Therefore, very few educated youngsters of the last two generations cannot speak English. In the past few decades, Saudis have been roaming English-speaking countries for either education or vacation purposes. Accordingly, it is typical to hear Saudis slip in a word or two in the English language while speaking Arabic regardless of their English expertise level. Al-Hourani and Afizah (2013) argued that a huge number of individuals all over the world are bilingual, even in nations where they are monolingual (Turjoman, 2016).

An individual is considered bilingual if skilled in two languages or more. Multilingualism is typically the outcome of several factors, like intercultural marriage, colonization, education, cultural interaction, and numerous other factors. Similarly, an individual proficient in using two or more different languages is considered a multilingual speaker. Generally, bilinguals and multilingual inclined to switch two different languages during speaking are said to be using code-switching (Sharaf, 2014).

Although most previous century's research revealed that code-switching happened chaotically, linguists and ethnographers contend that code-switching in natural environments is methodical. There has been an increase in the study of code-switching as a linguistic feature of bilinguals and multilingual; yet, code-switching's fundamental nature, motives, and aims are still loosely characterized (Gardnar-Chloros, 2009). As a communication approach, code flipping aggravates or mitigates requests, denials, subject changes, elaborations, validations, comments, and explanations. De Fina (2007) stressed the possibility of code-switching to aid speakers in Saudi Arabia in the socio-linguistic development of their identities. Masrahi (2016) hypothesized that bilinguals use code shifts in their speech when they lack understanding of one language and strive to express a message more plainly in their mother tongue. As can be seen, the reasons and objectives of code-switching are not universally agreed upon, even though investigating them is a top priority in a linguistic study today. A better understanding of code-switching patterns, the objectives suggested by participation in code-switching activities, and categorizing code shifts used at various times and with diverse speakers would add to the amount of information on the code-switching problem.

The research will be useful for using more than one language. Upon completion of this study, it is hoped that people and researchers will be able to code-switch to meet the target success and know many cultures. Also, it is hoped they make suggestions and recommendations to benefit researchers in the field of this study. And to establish further studies on this subject, which combines code switch and its reasons. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify reasons of code-switching of Saudis as native speakers of Arabic and to know the significant differences of code-switching in relation to gender, age, qualification, and level of English. The study raises these research questions:

- What are the reasons of the code switching of Saudis as native speakers of Arabic?
- Are there significant differences in code-switching of Saudis as native speakers of Arabic due to gender, age, qualification, and level of English?

In the light of the questions, the researcher hypothesizes the following:
- There are reasons for code-switching of Saudis as native speakers of Arabic
- There are significant differences for code-switching performed by Saudis due to gender, age, qualification, and level of English

Thus, this study is limited by two limitations: the place is Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the population includes only Saudis.
Literature Review

Code switching

Code switching, as Ja’afa, and Maarof (2016) defined, is “considered as a communicative phenomenon of constantly switching between two languages in a bilingual’s speech collection” (p. 212-222). People usually shift code throughout their conversation on a daily basis. Several educated individuals who are fluent in English language as their Second Language (L2), regularly use code-switching through adding English words, phrases, or sentences into their conversations. While participants might unconsciously do code-switching where there is constantly a reason why this happens. Code-switching is decided by a group of linguistic and social influences. Code-switching is commonly used in multilingual as well as multicultural societies. In Asian countries like Nepal, Pakistan, India, in addition to China, people who are bilingual typically have English language as their second language while their first language is their mother tongue and dialect. Likewise, in European bilingual societies, such as France, Germany, Spain or even Italy, individuals may use English language alternatively as the language of classroom lessons (Bista, 2010; Ja’afar and Maarof, 2016).

Al-Hourani and Afizah (2013) stated in their study that the “Arabic-English code-switching phenomenon is widely observed among Arab speakers” (p. 40). This situation is widespread among Saudis, thus people who use both Arabic and English languages tend to code-switch much more often. Code-switching is now considered as a phenomenon which resulted from bilingualism in addition to multilingualism. Sociolinguists are highly interested in learning this phenomenon and the details of its occurrence. There are several influences of code-switching, such as cohesion, social topics, and status, fondness, as well as an inducement (Sharaf Eldin, 2014).

Concept of Code-switching

Code-switching is defined as a “mixture of words, phrases, and sentences from two separate grammatical sub-systems through sentence limits in the current occurrence” (Ayeomoni, 2006, p. 1). Alenezi (2010) also defined code-switching as “the apposition within the current conversation of passages of speech which belong to two dissimilar grammatical systems or subsystems” (p. 3).

Code-switching has also been defined by many linguists. It was also defined as the practice of switching from one language to the other in the middle of speech while both individuals recognize the same languages (Al-Hourani & Afizah, 2013). It is the methodical alternating application of two languages in a single exchange.

To sum up, code-switching is seen as the shifting from one language to another in exchange or statement. It refers to an alternative application of first language as well as the target language, a purpose of communication by language instructors if necessary (Parveen & Aslam, 2013).

Code mixing is mainly the embedding of several linguistic elements like affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases in addition to clauses from a co-operative activity where participants must resolve what they hear with what they comprehend (Ayeomoni, 2006).

Types of Code Switching

Code-switching has an assortment of practices. It could happen at the beginning or end of a sentence. In inter-sentential code-switching, the language switch is accomplished at sentence limits. This is considered most often among fluent bilingual individuals. In intra-sentential code-switching, the shift is accomplished at the middle of a sentence with no pauses, hesitancies, or breaks. Inter-sentential language switching is defined as mechanical switching. It happens intuitively and fills in unidentified or unavailable expressions in one language. This sort of code-switching is additionally recognized as code-mixing. Additional sort of code-switching is known as code changing. It is categorized by fluent intra-
sentential shifts, moving focus from one language to another one. It is driven by situational as well as stylistic influences and the switch among two languages is cognizant and deliberate (Bista, 2010).

Efforts have been made to outline the phenomenon of code-switching. Researchers recognized three dissimilar kinds of code-switching that make bilinguals mix or switch between languages that they are frequently acquainted with and involved into daily. Bullock and Toribio (2009) stated that sundry bilinguals would apply their ability to shift from one language to another to communicate with other individuals in an unchanged background and typically in the equivalent speech.

Moreover, with bilingual individuals, code-switching is conventionally a suggestion of acquaintance deficit. Many scholars have suggested that code-switching is regularly applied by bilinguals to achieve specific objective communication during an exchange by individuals. Furthermore, code-switching is considered an option in defining the etymological selections used by individuals in choosing a dialogue wherever the recompenses and outlays for applying which languages were considered by those who use code-switching in a specific speech (Shin, 2010).

Additionally, Myers-Scotton (1993) indicated that the concept of code-switching is a low-level ability in the second language where the model is mediated on the idea. In the light of this model, code-switching is considered as either a marked or unmarked language selection in various dialogue circumstances. Thus, it focuses on the idea of code-switching as language selection made by individuals. It is thought that code-switching is as safe/unmarked selection when it is anticipated in a specific sort of interaction which is determined by aspects like social situations. However, what is anticipated in the communication like noticeable selection is considered as unpredictable, discounting situational and societal features (Parveen & Aslam, 2013).

Consequently, regarding the speaker and his relation with others, a marked selection is a negotiation (Myers-Scotton, 1993). There are two kinds of code-switching: namely situational and metaphorical, as recognized by Bloom and Gumperz (1972). Situational code-switching is affected by dialogue exchange or communication like alteration in participant, setting, or topic. The metaphorical code-switching functions as a conversational approach to contribute conversational actions like an apology, complaint, and request. From an alternative standpoint, Poplack (1980) considered that code-switching has three types: tag-switching, inter-sentential, and intra-sentential (Nilep, 2006).

**Reasons for Code Switching**

Utterers might change code from one to another in order to demonstrate cohesion within a social group to differentiate themselves, to contribute in social encounters, to discourse a specific topic, to show feelings as well as fondness, or to influence and induce the audience (Sharaf Eldin, 2014). In order to show cohesion, Holmes (2000) stated that “a speaker may (...) switch to another language as a signal of group membership and shared ethnicity within an addressee”. He (2000) added that “code-switching could be applied to show solidarity among individuals from various or the similar ethnic assemblies” (pp. 5-7).

Occasionally, individuals may tend to apply dissimilar languages to suggest a specific social status or even to differentiate themselves among different social classes in order to show social status. Correspondingly, they may try “to show power over the less powerful” as suggested by Al Khatib (2003, pp. 409-422). Consequently, connecting switching codes as a method to show one’s social class is now possible. Thus, an individual who can speak two languages or more is well-educated. Hence, it could be considered as a way to extricate oneself.
Additionally, code-switching could be applied by individuals to express specific attitudes as well as feelings. People might switch codes to show joy, enthusiasm, irritation, grief, and numerous additional feelings. Holmes (2000) mentioned that language switching is frequently applied to indicate condemnation. Therefore, an individual might code-switch as they are upset. Moreover, Al-Khatib stated that speech may apply beyond one language to show irritation and displeasure. Again, Holmes (2000) granted another good instance for code-switching to reveal fondness.

To Influence, the audience, Holmes (2000) described that metaphorical code-switching is “code-switching for rhetorica” (pp. 5-7). Code-switching is frequently applied in talking in rhetoric determination to draw attention or to persuade listeners. Nerges (2011) revealed that “code-switching will draw the participant’s attention and will enhance their motivation to carefully scrutinize the message presented” (p. 45) (i.e., when speakers applied code switching in persuading and rhetoric, they would be more capable of attaining their objective and in the persuasion of their audience since). Code switching seizes consideration and reproduces a specific socio-economic individuality which could grant the utterer more trustworthiness and dependability. Nerges (2011) concluded in her research that code-switching is considered an effective approach that leads to methodical handling of information particularly related to resilient arguments.

On the word of Yletyinen (2004), bilinguals habitually clarify that they use code-switching if they were not capable of finding a suitable communication or vocabulary term and if the language of exchange does not contain the specific word desirable to continue the conversation easily.

**Functions of Code Switching**

Functions of code-switching are to be considered in this research. There are diverse classifications of functions. Furthermore, Amorim (2012) revealed that “functions of discourse-related and participant-related code-switching will be discussed and their significance to classroom research” (p. 178). Previously, Bloom and Gumperz (1972) grounded their study on normally happening day-to-day talk and institutional dialogue. This indicates that two languages are code-switched in a single statement or among statements. As part of conversational code-switching the researcher proposes a variety of conversational functions of code-switching. They are as follows: print advertisements (Leung, 2006), quotations, interjections, reiteration, addressee specification, message qualification as well as personalization against objectification (Dykhanova, 2015).

Firstly, Yletyinen (2004) indicated that code-switching has significance in terms of direct as well as reported speech; this is the function of quotations. Frequently the speech of another individual, which is quoted in a conversation, will be in a dissimilar language. Quotation is applied when, for instance, a person A needs to report something that person B has said; person A is talking in English but inserts the reported words of person B in German.

Nevertheless, when an individual is quoted, the quotation is not constantly in the language the individual usually uses. Secondly, code-switching could be applied in addressee specification, which indicates that by engaging code switching, an individual could direct his or her message to one of probable addressees. Addressee specification could be applied with monolinguals (accommodate to monolingual individuals through switching to the language they acknowledge) and with bilinguals (the addressee is asked to contribute to the conversation). Nonetheless, the addressee condition could as well be applied to dismiss someone by code-switching to a language no one else in the group comprehends apart from the speaking individual and his or her addressee. Thirdly, interjection happens when code-switching is applied to mark an interjection or used as sentence fillers (Ataş, 2012).
This function is very akin to tag switching. Fourthly, repetition happens if a message is reiterated in a different language. This replication might be used as an explanation of what has just been said then often, it additionally conveys additional implications in that it intensifies or highlights the message. Fifthly, message qualification indicates qualifying something which has been formerly said. In this instance the youngsters are first introduced in English and elucidated in Spanish before being further expounded in English. And lastly, there is the classification of switches which have the function of marking personalization versus objectification. This functional classification is more challenging to identify through the use of descriptive terms (Yletyinen, 2004).

This distinction of personalization vs. objectification recounts things like the difference between talking about action and talk as action, the level of speaker participation in, or distance from, a message, whether a statement reflects an opinion or knowledge, whether it denotes to certain cases or has the authority of commonly recognized fact. These things are in turn, encoded in code choices. For example, the researcher has an abstract where person A is talking about quitting smoking to person B; person A is codeswitching between Spanish and English. The researcher claims that the code contrast symbolizes capricious levels of speaker participation in the message as Spanish statements are modified while English ones reflect more distance. By way of explanation, individual A talks about her issue (how to stop smoking) in English yet carries out her issue (running out of cigarettes at night) in Spanish. Gumperz’s (1982) classifications of conversational functions of codeswitching are not easy (Botztepe 2003).

In no less than three of these functions, it is not obvious what the individuals achieve in dialogue while using code-switching. The issue with quotations is that a person does not know what is attained by it except the fact that individuals tend to report expressions in the language they initially spoke (Yletyinen, 2004). Botztepe (2003) argued that there are comparable issues with interjections and message qualification. For instance, the question of what certain discourse function is accomplished when inserting, as an example, English sentence filler to an otherwise Spanish word rests unanswered. To the extent that classroom discourse is apprehensive, Gumperz’s classifications are rather challenging to use for classroom discourse.

**Methods**

**Sampling**

This study used a descriptive method. The sample of this study consists of 426 Saudis as native speakers of Arabic. The characteristics of the sample are shown in the following table:

Table 1. *Gender variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table one indicates that the category “Female” shows 256 participants from the overall sample of 426, which is 59.7% while the category “Male” shows 173 participants from the overall sample of 426, which is 40.3%.

Table 2. *Age variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 – 24 years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34 years</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44 years</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 54 years</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 – 64 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table two indicates that the category “25 – 34 years” presented 201 from the overall sample which is 46.9%, and the category “35 – 44 years” ranked the second which presented 126 samples which is 29.4%. In addition, the table indicated that the category “18 – 24 years” and “45 – 54 years” presented similar frequency “54”, “42” respectively, which is 12.9%, 9.8% respectively.

Table 3. Occupation variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Employee</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector Employee</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businessman / Woman</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freelancer / Self Employed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three indicates that the “Government Employee” presented 166 sample out of the total sample study 429 which is 38.7%, and “Unemployed” presented 113 samples out of the overall study sample 429, which is 26.3%, while “private sector employee” and “student” presented 67, 63 sample respectively, which is 15.6%, 14.7% respectively. In addition, the table shows “Businessman / Woman”, “Freelancer / Self Employed”, and “Retired” presented 8,5,7 sample respectively, which is 1.9%, 1.2%, and 1.6% respectively.

Table 4. Educational level variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Secondary School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four reveals that “Bachelor” presented 214 from the overall sample study 429 which is 49.9%, while “Postgraduate” presented 116 samples from the overall sample study 429 which is 27%. The table also shows that “Secondary school” and “Diploma” presented 53, 35 samples from the overall sample study 429, which is 12.4, 8.2 respectively, while “Below Secondary School” is ranked last and presented 11 samples out of the overall study sample which is 2.6%.

Table 5. Proficiency in English language variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than satisfactory</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table five shows that “Good” as well as “Very Good” ranked first which presented 108, 104 sample respectively, which is 25.2%, 14.5%, while “Satisfactory” and “Excellent” ranked second which
presented 68, 60 sample respectively, which is 15.9%, 14% respectively, as for “Less that Satisfactory” and “Poor” were ranked the least which presented 48, 41 sample from the overall sample study which is 11.2%, “9.6%” respectively.

**Tools and Procedures**

A questionnaire designed by the researcher based upon the previous studies is distributed among Saudis as native speakers of Arabic and it consisted of 30 items. To ensure the questionnaire reliability, the researcher applied it to a pilot sample of (10) individuals which were excluded from the study sample with a two-week period between the first and second time it was distributed. The reliability of the test was calculated using a correlation coefficient. The value of the Pearson correlation coefficient is (0.83). It is a high value and acceptable for the purposes of this study. The equation used was Cronbach alpha (Cronbach - Alpha) for internal consistency. The level of scale answer for each paragraph was according to the five-point Likert scale identified as follows: one represents strongly disagree, two represents disagree, three represents normal, four represents agree, five represents strongly agree. Likert scale was used to judge the results which were divided to High, medium, and Low according to the standard level.

Table 6. Reliability coefficient of Alpha Cronbach for the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Number of Paragraphs</th>
<th>Cronbach's alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table six demonstrates that Cronbach's alpha value is 94.7% which is a value that exceeds 60% therefore it is acceptable for research purposes.

For achieving the purpose of statistical treatment, the following statistical methods were used:

1. Mean and standard deviations.
2. T-test statistical (One Way Anova) and (Shaffee) test for dimensional comparisons where necessary.
3. The equation of Cronbach alpha and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Furthermore, practical procedures and statistical processing are used in the treatment of the study data.

In order to answer the first research question: “What are the reasons of code-switching of Saudis as native speakers of Arabic?” the mean and Standard Deviation has been calculated (see Appendix 1).

**Analysis and Findings**

As seen in Appendix 1, it is clear that the mean resulted High, Medium, as well as Low among the participants’ answers, where the overall means degree of applicability is low with a mean of 2.26 and a standard deviation of 0.73, while paragraph 15 “One of the postgraduate studies terms is to speak the English Language” ranked first 3.7 with a high degree of applicability, and paragraph 14 “One of the Businesses terms is to speak the English Language” ranked second with a mean of 3.65 and a medium degree of applicability, as for paragraph 8 “I miss the sense of belonging and loyalty of the Arabic language” had a mean of 1.68 with a medium degree of applicability, as for paragraph 12 “I have a feeling of inferiority in front of the advanced Western scientific civilization” ranked last with a mean if 1.62 with a medium degree of applicability.

To answer the second question “Are there significant differences of code-switching of Saudis as native speakers of Arabic due to gender, age, qualification and level of English?” T-test and Unilateral variation has been used. The result of the analysis is in table (9).

First: Gender Variation
Table 7. The result of the analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>T-Score</th>
<th>Statistical Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.3118</td>
<td>.77704</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.2262</td>
<td>.70258</td>
<td>428</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above reveals that the differences among the participants of the sample study regarding gender variable were not statistically significant in the field “Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic” whereas the degree is 0.237 which is higher than (0.05=&).

Second: Age Variable

Table 8. Unilateral variation analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>Average Squares</th>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.735</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>1.275</td>
<td>.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Groups</td>
<td>227.895</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230.630</td>
<td>428</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that the differences among the answers of the study sample participants regarding age variable in the field “Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic” where the degree of significance resulted as 0.279 which is higher than (0.05=&).

Third: Occupation Variable

Table 9. Unilateral variation analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>Average Squares</th>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>14.508</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.418</td>
<td>4.732</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Groups</td>
<td>216.123</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230.630</td>
<td>428</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 9. shows that the differences among the answers of the study sample participants regarding occupation variable in the field “Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic” where the degree of significance is lower than (0.05=&). To explain the results, a definitive test has been made and table 12 explains the results.

Table 10. Employee Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Stude nt</th>
<th>Governme nt</th>
<th>Privat e Secto r</th>
<th>Busine ss Man</th>
<th>Freelanc er</th>
<th>Retire d</th>
<th>Unemploy ed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language for Saudis as native</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Businesspeo ple</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above demonstrates that there were statistically significant differences among the field “Private Sector Employee” and “Unemployed”, according to the values of the mean it indicates that the differences were in “Private Sector Employee’s” favor, which has a mean of 2.57 while “Unemployed” mean is 2.05.

Fourth: Qualification Variable

Table 11. Unilateral variation analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>Average Squares</th>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>16.216</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.054</td>
<td>8.035</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Groups</td>
<td>214.415</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>.505</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230.630</td>
<td>428</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 11. indicates that the differences among the answers of the study sample participants regarding qualification variable in the field “Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic” where the degree of significance is lower than (0.05=&). To explain the results a definitive test has been made and table 12 explains the results.

Table 12. Qualification results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Mean Below School</th>
<th>Secondary School Diploma</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>Post Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic</td>
<td>Below Secondary School</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.844</td>
<td>0.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.489</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 12. reveals that there were statistically significant differences among “Secondary” and “Post Graduate” variable and according to the mean values it is concluded that the differences were in “Post Graduates” favor which has a mean of 2.55 while “Secondary” had a mean of 1.99. In addition, there were statistically significant differences among “Bachelor” and “Post Graduate” and according to the mean values were in “Post Graduate” favor which has a mean of 2.55 while “Secondary” has a mean of 2.17.

Fifth: Proficiency in English Language

Table 13. Unilateral variation analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>Average Squares</th>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The table 13 indicates that the differences among the answers of the study sample participants regarding qualification variable in the field “Reasons of integrating English language for Saudis as native speakers of Arabic” where the degree of significance is lower than (0.05=&). To explain the results a definitive test has been made (table 15). Additionally, the table above indicates that there were statistically significant differences among “Excellent” and “Poor” and according to the mean values it is concluded that the differences were in “Excellent” favor which has a mean f 2.97 while “Poor” had a mean of 1.5. In addition, there were statistically significant differences among “Good” and “less than satisfactory” and according to the mean it is resulted that the differences were in “Good” favor which has a mean of 2.27 while “less that satisfactory” got 1.8.

**Discussion and Implication**

The results indicated that the means of the fields were high, low, and medium among the sample population. The overall mean with a low significance is (2.26), with a standard deviation of 0.73, where (15) ranked first 3.7 with a high applicability. This shows that learning in universities requires using English language. And English language skills are required for enrollment, where the relation between the student and his/her mother tongue weakens once he/she graduates. Language is not only a way of communication, and their efforts are focused on it, which weakens their mother tongue. The longer a student uses a foreign language he/she acquires the habits and values behind this language. Therefore, today's generation speaks a foreign language while talking to others more than his/her mother tongue and eventually loses his/her identity (De Fina, 2007).

**Gender Variation**

The results indicate that there are differences in the responses of the sample population with regards to the gender variable with no statistical significance in the field, where the significance is 0.237 which is a value less than (0.05=&), the mixture of two languages in the same levels for both females and males, and that is because both genders are exposed to the same circumstances, hence women now travel as much as men and roam around countries (Ayeomoni, 2006; and Alenezi, 2010). Females may also befriend other genders as men. Therefore, they gain the same habits and language.

**Age Variable**

The results indicate that there are differences among the responses of the sample population regarding age variable, which is not statistically significant, where the statistical significance is 0.279 which is a value higher than 0.05, individuals among all age groups which talk and communicate with others combine both Arabic and English language and this may be due to several reasons such as TV shows, social media platforms, or perhaps befriending foreigners (Al-Hourani & Afizah, 2013; Masrahi, 2016).

**Occupation Variable**

The results show that there are differences among the responses of the sample population among private sector and unemployed which has a mean of 2.557. This indicates that private sectors and private companies required the employees to speak English language and practice it. In addition, the clients and customers of their firms could probably be foreigners. Therefore, the employees of the company must have the skills of using English language in order to deal with those customers in addition to the programs and websites on the internet, computers are in English language, and this is how employees gain the skills (Gumperz’s, 1982; Botztepe, 2003).
Qualification Variable

The results indicate that there is a statistical significance among “Secondary” and “Postgraduate”, and according to the mean, the differences are in “Post Evaluation” favor, which has a mean of 2.55, the postgraduate individuals are more educated and familiar with English language than other students, and this is due to the prerequisites of the subjects studied (Bista, 2010), or that learning the language is necessary for postgraduate students (Al-Hourani and Afizah, 2013; Turjoman, 2016).

Proficiency in English Language

The results show that there is statistical significance among “Excellent” and “Poor” and according to the mean, the differences wherein “Excellent” favor with a mean of 2.97. It is resulted that the individuals in which speaks excellent English language combine Arabic language and English language more than others (Al Khatib, 2003); and this is because they are aware of English language expressions more that Arabic language expression and would sometimes find English vocabulary more expressive and delivers their ideas in a better way (Al-Hourani & Afizah, 2013).

In accordance with the results of the study, the researcher recommends that the necessity of developing and spreading the English language across English language speakers to show others the importance and depth of the language. Moreover, syllabuses should include activities and training courses for English language learning. Additionally, to extensively raise the significance of forming training courses for teaching non-speakers of the target language, and finally, the need for students to keep their interest in their mother language and take pride in it, also use it in all aspects of their lives.

Conclusion

As the aims of the research inquire about the use of code-switching among Saudis who speak both Arabic and English to identify the reasons of code-switching and to know the significant differences regarding gender, age, qualification, and level of English; concerning gender variables, the mixture of two languages in the same levels for both females and males, and that is because both genders are exposed to the same circumstances; thus, it is better to let them freely use code switching. Moreover, it was found that individuals among all age groups combined both Arabic and English. This may be due to several reasons which need using code-switching thoroughly. Since private sectors and private companies require the employees to speak English language and practice, this will improve the use of both languages among the community. Postgraduates are more educated and familiar with English language than other students because of the necessity for studying the language. Finally, those who had better proficiency used English to deliver their ideas in a better way, thus it is favored to seize this opportunity to improve their language.

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https://lup.lub.lu.se/studentpapers/search/publication?q=author+exact+%22Leung%2C+Carrie%22


Challenges of Short Sentence Writing Encounter 1st Year Undergraduate Students in English Language Departments at Al-Baha University

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Received: 7/17/2021 Accepted: 10/5/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
This study aims to find out the most common challenges of writing short sentences encountered by first-year English-major undergraduate students of English language departments. A mixed method was used including quantitative and qualitative as data was obtained using student questionnaires and interview questions for the lecturers. About 122 first-year English-major undergraduate students (%50.4 female and %49.6 male) from the English Language Departments at all colleges of Al-Baha University were randomly chosen, including 30 lecturers, and were interviewed in the study (15 males and 15 females). The study revealed significant results which have shown difficulties in constructing short sentences, the distinction of active and passive voice, and the use of conjunctions, punctuations, quantifiers, and the correct auxiliary. Also, among common issues, students find difficulties in using comparative and superlative degree, subject–verb agreement and the use of articles. Thus, the study recommends that first-year English-major undergraduate students should be given more written exercises as well as written feedback so that students can be able to write more effective short sentences. The study suggests that more studies could be conducted qualitative researches for first-year students of English language department to investigate and analyze the most common challenges and difficulties of the students’ written samples or documents.

Keywords: EFL, writing skill, short sentences, sentence structure, writing challenges

Cite as: Alsalami, A. I. (2021). Challenges of Short Sentence Writing Encounter 1st Year Undergraduate Students in English Language Departments at Al-Baha University. Arab World English Journal, 12 (4) 118-131. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.8
Introduction

Out of the four key skills that make up language, writing is an important aspect that should be mandatory to guarantee proficiency (Brown, 2000). For academics, having good writing skills is a necessity. That being considered, writing in English as an EFL/ESL learner has brought about difficulties for most second language learners (SLLs) in the aspect of writing well-structured paragraphs. Students understand that in writing, being productive and having it as a skill helps one come up with well-articulated sentences and can also connect them in a given order. Second language learners find it difficult to come up with complete sentences, considering how difficult construction of a sentence may be for them. Because of this, they fall back towards adopting different subskills and strategies pertaining the language in question. It should also be noted that writing is a complex procedure since the writer is required to move repeatedly backward s and forwards through their ideas and the written texts (Harris and Cunningham, 1994). A two-way interaction is established between the learner and the text and thus knowledge is developed as the learner comes up with written texts (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987).

This complexity is due to the requirement of operating a high level of language control, generating ideas, monitoring, and assessing the written production (Murcia and Olshtain, 2000). Moreover, Nunan (1999) argues that production of a coherent piece of writing is an enormous challenge, especially in one’s second language. It should be considered that the crucial topics that need to be discussed within the L2 writing research include the analysis of L2 students' difficulties in writing.

According to Akram and Mahmood (2007), short sentence structuring decides how the significant components are placed together, from punctuation to word order, while still adhering to simple word order laws. There are several other considerations to address when writing correctly constructed sentences. There are two prevalent sentence construction errors:

a. Run-on sentences occur when incorrect punctuation is used to connect various sections of a sentence.

b. Sentence fragments are sentences that lack the required components to form a complete, grammatically correct sentence (Al-Khasawneh & Maher, 2010).

The truth is that learners create a list of common errors despite having functional theoretical grammatical skills and can recognize such mistakes if they are attentive enough to do so. Datchuk and Kubina (2013) concluded that it does not seem unusual when first-year students experience difficulties in writing since their first language substantially impacts second-language learning. English has become one of the main classes available from formal to the university level (Demirezen, 2012). The students are expected to learn English compulsively in the first and second semesters. Unfortunately, there is an issue in the structuring of English short sentences by students. The ambiguity in English's written form by these students has created a misunderstanding between the writer and the reader (Al Fadda, 2012). A wrongly written sentence makes a misinterpretation of the intended message to be conveyed.

This study aims to specify and investigate common writing problems related to short sentence structure among first-year English-major undergraduate students. The study also aims
to increase instructors' awareness of students' challenges in writing well-structured sentences. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1) What are the common challenges do students face when writing short sentence?
2) What are the most frequent challenging short sentence components among the students writing?
3) Are there any significant differences between male and female first-year students regarding difficulties in writing short sentence?

Literature Review
Previous Studies Addressing Challenges in Sentence Construction
Hameed (2016) investigated the institutional issues that Pakistani students face when writing in English. Excessive usage of coordinate sentences and misapplication of topic sentences are examples of these issues. According to the findings of this study, "Pakistani students struggle with the use of cataphoric and anaphoric references, ellipsis, substitution, and genre-related organizational ties" (Haider, 2014). Lack of drive, self-confidence, and writing nervousness are also issues for Pakistani ESL students. Khan (2011) researched the difficulties that Arab students face when writing a well-developed paragraph in English. He mentioned that individuals must walk a fine line between challenges such as content quality, organization, intent, audience, and vocabulary. Khan (2011) discovered that students write clauses that do not adhere to the punctuation and sentence structures. According to the researcher, simple, compound, and complex sentences present another challenge for ESL learners. Demerezen (2012) investigated the frameworks that cause problems in simple sentences for Turkish university students. The researcher has explained the fundamental elements of a simple sentence as well as its various patterns. As per the research, a simple extended sentence, defined as double or triple structures in subjects, verbs, and objects, is a source of difficulty for Turkish students. According to the research scientist, double predicates in a simple sentence also confuse students. The primary emphasis of this research is on the neglected and underutilized structures known as simple sentences with extended phrasal elements, as defined by the researcher.

Sentence Structure
General background
Sentence structure governs how various segments of a sentence are placed together, from punctuation to word order. In addition to upholding simple word order guidelines, there are several other factors to consider when writing accurately and precisely constructed sentences. Alduais (2012) states that there have been two prevalent sentence construction errors. First, run-on sentences are formed by using incorrect exclamation marks to connect various sections of a sentence. The second issue is sentence fragments, which lack the required components to create a complete, coherent sentence. According to Al-Seaghayer (2014), sentence form is influenced by more than just grammar; it is also influenced by style and rhythm. Several sentence lengths and structures are used in effective academic writing. Excessively long sentences can be frustrating for readers, but too many concise sentences can render the text sound choppy and incoherent.

Run-on Sentences
Ur Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) state that an independent clause is a string of words that may function alone as a complete sentence. Independent clauses may be connected in various methods; however, a run-on sentence emerges when they are connected, lacking correct
punctuation. Run-on sentences are a grammatical error, not a length issue; even relatively short sentences may involve this inaccuracy (Xian, 2014). Two common errors lead to run-on sentences.

**Comma Splice**

According to Tauguchi (2006), a comma cannot join two independent clauses, and this type of sentence is known as a comma splice. See this example of a comma splice error:

*The assignment submission was after the deadline, deduction of marks was made.*

Another comma splice issue is when they appear within long sentences expressing multiple clauses, thus bringing about confusion. For example:

*Yvonne loves drinking her tea with rosemary essence, when she drinks it cold, she also loves it without sugar.*

In this example, there is no clear understanding that part of the sentence should be conjoined to the clause "when she drinks it cold." Is her preference loving rosemary essence when she drinks her tea cold or is her preference tea without sugar? Either a semicolon, period, or conjunction clearly defines what the sentence means, with each punctuation mark giving a different meaning as per the placement (Perlmutter & Soames, 1979).

**Missing comma with a coordinating conjunction**

Malaca-Sistoza (2016) states that seven unique coordinating conjunctions can be used in sentence construction which includes but, and, yet, for, nor, or, so. In the event one uses either of the coordinating conjunctions, they should introduce a comma before it. Without the use of a comma, a run-on sentence may occur, thus confusing. For example:

*Students gathered in the assembly hall, and the principal gave a speech on abortion.*

**Sentence Fragments**

A fragment describes a collection of words that do not have all the components that compose a grammatically correct sentence. A subject and a predicate are two primary components that comprise a string of words to create a sentence. Murray and Karcher (2000) suggest that even though sentence fragments are primarily used in style by journalists for creative writing, they seldom apply in sentence construction in academic or any other form of formal writing. Below are examples of issues with sentence fragments.

**Missing Predicate**

According to Khan (2011), a typical simple example of a sentence fragment is when a sentence has no main verb. A noun phrase cannot be termed as a sentence as it requires a predicate to be grammatically correct. For example:

*After they received the delivery, they became satisfied. A long day of waiting.*

**Dependent Clause**

According to Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016), a dependent clause is made up of a subject and predicate, even though it does not fully express a comprehensive thought. It has the capability of being attached to an independent clause to create a complete sentence. Elander et al. (2006) state that subordinating conjunctions such as when, after, because, while, since, if, or
although are primarily used in the formation of dependent clauses. If one of these words is added at the start of an independent clause, it becomes a dependent clause. For example:

**Correct:** The sky was clear.

**Incorrect:** when the sky was

The first sentence is an independent clause that has the necessary components to pass as a complete sentence. The subordinating conjunction "when" was added and made the sentence a dependent clause. This created a sentence fragment that needed to be connected to another clause to formulate a full sentence.

**Misuse of Present Participle**

A present participle is known as a type of verb that has an ending with the suffix -ing (example, stretching, walking, and eating). However, there are instances that it is misused, where a present or past simple form should be utilized instead (Hameed, 2016). An -ing verb alone can be associated with a modifier that refers to a different part of a sentence with no grammar coherence when marked at the beginning of a predicate. Ghani, M. (2003) suggests that a common verb that is misused in this perspective is "to be" that is conjugated as "being" instead of "is" or "was." For example

**Incorrect:** She ranted all through the day. The argument lacking reason.

**Correct:** She ranted all through the day. The argument lacked reason

**OR:** She ranted all through the day, the argument lacking reason.

**Split up Overly Long Sentences**

According to Chambers and Yunus (2017), there are instances whereby a long sentence meets the grammar requirements. However, its length is hard to follow. To avoid such issues to achieve a more straightforward and easy-to-read sentence, there is a need to avoid overly long sentences. Al-Khasawneh and Maher (2010) suggest that sentence length is considered correct if it carries fifteen to twenty-five words. An excess of over 30 words in a sentence makes a sentence long, and ambiguous thus needs revising. For example:

**Incorrect:** Due to the effects of abortion, defined as the sudden removal of a fetus before it is fully developed, it should be considered a crime that should be dealt with since several studies do indicate that there is a significant number of deaths associated with this practice, thus needs to be addressed fully.

**Correct:** Due to the effects of abortion, defined as the sudden removal of a fetus before it is fully developed, the practice should be considered a crime. Several studies do indicate that there is a significant number of deaths associated with this practice. There is need to address the issue of abortion fully.

**Linking Together Overly Short Sentences**

Having short sentences is good since they are more transparent and more readable. However, excessive short sentences can make the written work appear choppy, disjointed, and repetitive (Andrews, 2005). For example:
Incorrect: The assignment was marked on the first day. The results were also out within a week. The results were posted at 12 noon. This will be done for all quizzes.
Correct: The assignment was marked on the first day, the results released within a week, and posted at 12 noon. This will be done for all quizzes.

Writing Problems within Saudi Context

There have been previous research works conducted that shows the issues Saudi English-Majors do face as they write as EFL learners. Some of the studies conducted discuss writing strategies in L1 and L2, and other studies focused on analysis of errors that the learners commit. The paragraphs below discuss and formulate a review of errors that most students commit.

A study conducted by Al-Khairy (2013) investigated the problems that most Saudi English-major undergraduate students face in academic writing at Al-Taif University. The study was focused on the exploration of issues that the students did face in the viewpoint of the instructors or the members of the faculty, including the students. The collected data was accomplished by the use of interviews and questionnaires. It revealed that the students had very weak writing skills that needed to be addressed. Most of them did commit errors specifically at the sentence level. The recommendations offered by the study to address the issues raised included diagnosis of the students' writing issues from the beginning of their university study.

Younes and Albalawi (2015) held a study that discussed the most common types of writing problems that female students majoring in English language and translation at Tabuk University. Collected data was achieved through the use of writing documents and questionnaires. The findings indicated that the issues found fell under three categories. The first was grammatical errors, specifically on tenses, prepositions, syntax, subject-verb agreement and how to utilize articles in sentence structure. The second category is punctuation issues whereby they were not applied where needed, misused, or added where they are not required. The third category was spelling in terms of omission, substitution, disordering, addition, segmentation, and unrecognizable words.

The study conducted by Mohammad and Hazarika in 2016, focused on probing the difficulties that students at Najran University have in skills of writing. The collected data was achieved through the use of questionnaires and written samples. It performed an analysis of 50 students at the preparatory year program. The main focus was on capitalization, punctuation, use of language, grammar and spelling. The study did reveal that students mostly memorized the answer paragraphs during exams instead of reading, and applying what they have learnt as they answer each question. The remedial measures offered by the study included the use of learner-centered teaching techniques, including the demand of students to write more descriptive paragraphs especially on the topics they preferred.

A study in 2017 by Alhaisoni, Gaudel and Al-Zuoud did research on the issues in article use by Ha'il University students in Saudi Arabia. The sample for study was made up preparatory year students. The data collected was achieved through the use of written samples from 150 students. The participants had the obligation to write descriptive paragraphs on one of four topics. An analysis of the written samples showed that students had the tendency to eliminate the
definite, including indefinite articles, insert unnecessary articles or substitute the articles with each other. Even so, the article elimination was the frequent issue that affected the students.

**Methods**

This study was conducted using descriptive statistics by using the frequency technique to determine the common challenges of writing short sentences encountered by first-year English-major undergraduate students. A 25-item Questionnaire was used to collect information from students. From a qualitative research point of view, interviews were conducted on 30 instructors within the English language departments at Al-Baha University to determine the awareness of the issues faced by students in the construction of short sentences.

**Population and Sampling**

The population includes all first-year English-major undergraduate students in Al-Baha University colleges. The study sample was made up of 30 instructors from the English language departments and 122 first-year English-major undergraduate students from the English language departments at Al-Baha University. Among them 62 were females (%50.8), whereas 60 were males (%49.2). All students were chosen from first-year English-major undergraduate students from English language departments.

<p>| Table 1. the distribution of the study sample (students) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Table 2. the distribution of the study sample (instructors) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tools and Design**

In this study, data collection was done using an online questionnaire for the 122 study participants and interview questions answered by 30 instructors within the English department of Al-Baha University. The online questionnaire was intended to collect data regarding the difficulties in constructing short sentences among the first-year students in my English department. There were 25 questions to be answered based on five-Likert-scale coded: Strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree (see Appendix A).

The questions were tailored to determine the challenges first-year English major students face in constructing short sentences. A 5-Likert scale was used to assess the degree of agreement, in percentage, students had with each question posed from "strongly agree," "agreed," "disagree," "Strongly disagree," "Not sure." Considering that most students learn English as their second language, 69.6 percent agreed that there was no substantial vocabulary that could help the students write many short sentences.
Table 3. Correlation between the Learning Practices and Student Attitudes towards structuring short sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sentence Structure</th>
<th>Achievement Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above findings, the correlation coefficient between learning habits and sentence structure is negative and non-significant. This means that the correlation is not statistically valid. It also demonstrates that the students’ attitudes and success in learning the construction of short sentence structure through literature are highly correlated. Their language proficiency is unsatisfactory, indicating that they have not demonstrated exceptional results. The explanatory variables for this can be emphasized by the reality that, while students have been educated on constructing sentence structure via literature, they cannot create their forms or any technique for grasping them. Furthermore, instructors should not allow students to research with their peer groups to generate ideas, improving their ability to produce grammatically correct structures. Above all, the program does not encourage the driving factors associated with creating sentence structures, such as evaluation, reasoning, discovery, creativity, awareness, and comprehensive systems.

Table 4. Independent t-test based on first-year students and level of university education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>First-Year Students</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>Male (N=60)</td>
<td>41.13</td>
<td>29.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (N=62)</td>
<td>53.15</td>
<td>31.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Education</td>
<td>1st Year (N=122)</td>
<td>64.38</td>
<td>46.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An Independent-Samples T-Test was used to investigate the correlation between difficulties in short sentence structure and university education level, as well as first-year students. The first independent-samples T analysis was conducted on the mean score of the sentence structure and first-year students' attitudes to measure the hypotheses between university education levels and their challenges in learning sentence structure via literary works. According to Table 4, the gap in mean scores between first-year students is very high, i.e., 53.15. It demonstrates that first-year students do not outperform the other students in different levels of university education in the course of learning short sentence structure.

Table 4 indicates that the mean score and standard deviation vary so little depending on the parameters and learners in the English department. This research demonstrates no association regarding student gender and their understanding of short sentence structure through literary works. The mean score between variables and level of university education differs by 17.62 points.

There was a disagreement in various areas of questions asked. About 74.5 percent of the students disagreed that there are no sufficient homework exercises for first-year students majoring in English. 46.7 percent of the students also disagreed that instructors do not encourage the first-year English-major students to practice written English effectively and constantly. It appears that 42.6 percent of the students also disagreed that students who major in English are not motivated for practicing written English to improve the construction of short sentences. Concurrently, 37.7 percent of the students majoring in English are not provided with appropriate
curricula for learning short sentence construction. Lastly, 41.9 percent of the first-year students majoring in English are good in written English, writing skills, and sentence construction.

Table 5. Results of the Independent Sample t-test (first-year students and level of university education)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. E.M.</th>
<th>TValue</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>E Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Year Students</td>
<td>Male (N=60)</td>
<td>41.13</td>
<td>29.21</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>-5.832</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (N=62)</td>
<td>53.15</td>
<td>31.25</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>0.639</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Education</td>
<td>1st Year (N=122)</td>
<td>64.38</td>
<td>46.13</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>0.639</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 indicates that female students' mean achievement test score is substantially higher than that of male students. The explanation for this disparity is self-evident: female students take their responsibilities more seriously than male students. Table 5 indicates a slight gap in the mean score of first-year students and other learners at different university levels of education. The mean achievement test score for all first-year English students is 64.38. The variation in the t-value between the achievement test and the degree of university education is shown in Table 5.

Students were not aware of how to answer specific questions, such as English-major students not obtaining the necessary writing techniques for constructing the short sentences in the classrooms, which accounted for 20.5 percent of the students. This was the same case whereby students were unsure if the English department focuses more on spoken English but not written. 23.8 percent of the students were unsure whether instructors always express their satisfaction with the first-year students' standard in writing short sentences and writing skills. 18.9 percent of the students were unsure if there are no suitable lessons for teaching written English and writing skills for students majoring in English.

Findings and Discussion

An interview conducted on 30 instructors of the English language departments gave important feedback that explains the issues with short sentence construction for English department students. They all agreed that first-year English department students were below average in terms of writing skills. Instructors were advised to be aware of this situation and help solve these common mistakes. They revealed that students had no general understanding of a sentence and were unaware of what a complete sentence is. They added that students are still unable to identify the components of a sentence. Sometimes they confuse in differentiating between sentences in English and Arabic, mainly when they write sentences without verbs. They mentioned that students seem to apply the "negative transfer" concepts of SLA using the sentence structure in Arabic, which allows a nominal sentence, into English. Students have some difficulties in English vocabularies, so they should increase their language by practicing them while writing English. Moreover, they advised that students should pay attention to the tense, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling.

Considering students still confuse sentence structure, the instructors answered that they did not expect them to write good conjunctions and punctuation marks. Many students use a lot of "and" so that they also seem to depend on the Arabic grammatical rules. The students also expressed frequent errors or mistakes of punctuation and conjunctions, especially adversative, temporal, and causal conjunctions. They are more familiar with additive conjunctions (and, but). Even though they know how to use these two critical sub-skills of writing, many students cannot
apply conjunctions and punctuation marks when writing short sentences in a paragraph. Another issue highlighted is that students have relevant information about using active voice, but have many difficulties in applying the passive voice. Passive voice is generally avoided by most of students when writing sentences.

First-year students use pronouns, but they confuse them, especially the objective and the possessive ones. All students have no difficulties using first-person pronouns, but many of them encounter challenges in writing reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives. As observed, the subject and object pronouns are the most common and used types of pronouns by first-year students. All these issues presented during the instructors' interview were used as the baseline results for a discussion on the right way to assist them in constructing correct short sentences.

About 86.9 percent of the students agreed that there is a need for improvement on how students majoring in English are taught accuracy in the basics of writing skills. This was the most challenging issue contributing to students having a problem constructing short sentence parts, including grammar concepts.

Another issue raised was that 77 percent of students who were majoring in English did have difficulty using irregular verbs in sentence construction correctly. Moreover, 64.8 percent of the student had difficulty using conjunctions in sentence construction properly. Additionally, 65.5 percent of the students who were majoring in English had difficulty in using punctuation marks such comma (,), semi-colon (;), colon (:), and apostrophe (’), with 73.7 percent of the students having difficulty in constructing passive sentences. Also, 68.8 percent of students had difficulty in using irregular plural nouns in sentence construction correctly.

The above results show the common problems that students face within the English department that support the common challenges students face while constructing short sentences. The most challenging for novice writers in English includes a verb in the sentence. Students also find it challenging to understand the difference between is and are as main verbs and helping verbs. For most of them, these verbs can not to main verbs. The most difficult challenge can be concluded in tense, number, pronoun, preposition, capitalization, spelling, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement.

Sometimes, students are frequently applying the mother-tongue structure, lack of vocabulary knowledge, insufficient knowledge of grammar, poor writing practice, are examples of the common writing challenges. The following are common issues realized in sentence construction among Students;

- Categories in general, punctuations and capitalizations
- Using the correct auxiliary.
- Using quantifiers Countable and uncountable nouns and adjectives with them like little, much, more, few, a lot of, less, many, etc.
- Comparative and superlative degree
- Pronoun Disagreement. They occur when pronouns do not agree in number with the nouns to which they refer. Ex. Incorrect: Every boy must bring their own dinner. Correct: Every boy must bring his own dinner.
It is recommended to sit down and discuss students' mistakes to help them figure out where exactly they lack as well as highlight the differences between English and Arabic concerning sentence structure. The most helpful strategy is error correction to improve their level efficiently and effectively. Generally, when teaching writing skills, instructors must avoid any complexity and try to help learners express their ideas in straightforward ways. So, it is better to apply every strategy that pays attention to more practice through copying, dictation, words/sentences re-ordering, sentence completion, and other available simple techniques and integrated method.

Everyone has a dominant learning style depending on the situation. There are eight in total: Visual learners, aural learners, verbal learners, etc. Instructors should encourage students to give examples imitating the ones provided by their instructor, arrange the separated parts of the grammatically correct short sentence, and deconstruct the correct short sentence into its parts. Lastly, unexpectedly, the study found that female students scored higher than that of male students did. The reason seems to be because of self-evident as female students handled any task more seriously than male students.

**Conclusion**

As mentioned, this study aims to find out the most common challenges of writing short sentences encountered by first-year English-major undergraduate students of English language departments, and to increase instructors' awareness of students' challenges in writing well-structured sentences. Thus, after carefully studying the problem that face students in writing short sentences, they were found that their writing skills were below average (i.e., they were unable to identify the components of a sentence), therefore it is instructors’ duty should be concentrated on the awareness of this situation and help them in solving these common mistakes. Additionally, students show negative transfer concepts of SLA using the sentence structure in Arabic besides their difficulties in English vocabularies, so it is better to pay attention to English tenses, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling. Moreover, it is found that students were not able to write good conjunctions and punctuation marks besides they were found that they were an able to differentiate between active and passive sentences, and find difficulties in using irregular verbs in sentence construction correctly. These difficulties were found due to the fact that students are frequently applying their mother-tongue structure, lack of vocabulary knowledge, and insufficient knowledge of grammar. Thus, this study is highly supporting the use of error correction strategy to, efficiently and effectively, improve their sentence writing level. Generally, female students in the English department were found that they achieved better than male students, unexpectedly, due to their self-evident (female students take their responsibilities more seriously than male students).

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References


### Appendixes

Table 6. *calculation of Questionnaire responses (percentages and standard deviation)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NT (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Students majoring in English are not provided with appropriate curricula for learning short sentence construction in the first year.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>In the first year, English-major students do not obtain the necessary writing techniques for the construction of the short sentences in the classrooms</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>In the first year, English-major students are not aware of what are the parts of a sentence</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>In the first year, English-major students have no adequate vocabulary helping the students in writing many short sentences</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>There are no sufficient homework exercises are given to first-year students majoring in English</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>In the first year, the English-major students are not given enough time to exercise writing in the classrooms</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Instructors do not encourage the first-year English-major students to practice written English effectively and constantly</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges of Short Sentence Writing Encounter 1st Year Undergraduate Students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>In the first year, Students-major in English has no motivation for practicing written English to improve the construction of short sentences.</td>
<td>14.8 27 34.4 8.2 15.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>In the first year, the English department focuses more on spoken English but not written.</td>
<td>22.1 30.3 18 9 20.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>In the first year, there are no sufficient lessons for teaching written English and writing skills for students majoring in English</td>
<td>21.3 27 24.6 8.2 18.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>In the first year in the English department, Instructors do not insist on checking and correcting sentence construction in the exercises and assignments.</td>
<td>9.8 25.4 26.2 27 11.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>There is a need for improvement on how students majoring in English are taught accuracy in the basics of writing skills</td>
<td>50 36.9 3.3 3.3 6.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Instructors focus on ensuring students' complete taught lessons, but not the necessity and importance of mastery of sentence construction</td>
<td>20.5 34.4 22.1 9.8 13.1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>In the first year, English-major students are well taught and are aware of the basics of sentence construction</td>
<td>13.9 35.2 19.7 14.8 16.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>In the first year, students majoring in English are given enough units of teaching that offer lessons on sentence structure</td>
<td>18.9 38.5 23 7.4 12.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>In the first year, students majoring in English are good in written English, writing skills, and construction of a sentence</td>
<td>13.1 28.7 23 18.9 16.4</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>In the first year, instructors focus on discussing and correcting grammar and sentence construction mistakes with them</td>
<td>27 36.1 13.9 10.7 12.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Students are given more written feedback as well as written exercises to be able to write more effective short sentences</td>
<td>16.4 36.1 22.1 9 16.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Instructors always express their satisfaction with the first-year students' standard in writing short sentences and writing skills</td>
<td>19.7 26.2 23.8 6.6 23.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>In the first year, students-major in English have difficulty using irregular verbs in sentences construction correctly</td>
<td>43.4 33.6 6.6 4.9 11.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>In the first year, English majoring students have difficulty using irregular plural nouns in sentences construction correctly</td>
<td>35.2 33.6 13.9 3.3 13.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>In the first year, English majoring students have difficulty using conjunctions in sentences construction properly</td>
<td>24.6 40.2 13.9 4.9 16.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>In the first year, English majoring students have difficulty in constructing passive sentences</td>
<td>35.2 38.5 10.7 4.1 11.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>In the first year, students-major in English have difficulty in using punctuation marks such as comma (,), semi-colon (;), colon (:), apostrophe (’), etc.</td>
<td>31.1 34.4 14.8 6.6 13.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>In the first year, students-major in English have difficulty identifying parts of speech in sentences such as adverb, adjective, verb, noun, preposition, etc.</td>
<td>27.9 33.6 19.7 6.6 12.3</td>
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Augmented Reality Mobile Application for Children with Autism: Stakeholders’ Acceptance and Thoughts

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Received: 8/27/2021   Accepted: 10/4/2021   Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
American Psychiatric Association defined autism spectrum disorder as a neurological disorder due to which a diagnosed child may face difficulty in social communication or have a repeated or restricted set of behaviors. Learners with autism are primarily visual strategy learners, and they tend to learn better through pictures and images. Due to their cognitive disabilities, most learners with autism struggle to acquire new vocabulary. There have been many inventions invented by researchers all over the world to help autistic children with their education; however, not much emphasis put on the interventions that can assist autistic children with their English vocabulary learning process. Hence, this study intends to investigate the stakeholders’ acceptance and thoughts on the use of augmented reality mobile applications for children with autism. This study is a qualitative research study where interviews are used as an instrument to gather stakeholders’ views on the usefulness of the designed and developed augmented reality technology mobile application. This study involved seven respondents who come from different backgrounds and in different field areas. The results have gathered that the designed and developed mobile application has the prospect of helping children with autism with their English language learning process. With further improvements, the designed and developed mobile application is believed to be able to help autistic children to learn English vocabulary in a more exciting yet meaningful manner and at the same time help to spark their interest in their English vocabulary language learning process.

Keywords: autism spectrum disorder, augmented reality, English as Secondary Language learning, English vocabulary, mobile learning, mobile application

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.9
Introduction

Authors like Travis and Geiger (2010) and Hashim et al. (2010) mentioned that there is an increasing number of children across the globe being diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). These children are given a spotlight in today’s world, especially in the world of education (Castellon, 2021). ASD is defined as a neurological disorder that causes a child with ASD to experience persistent problems in social communication and interactions across multiple contexts (Perrotta, 2019). Children with ASD usually have the same traits in them which they usually show restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviors and interest (Yunus, Bissett, Penkala, Kadar & Liu, 2019). In today’s world of education, inclusive education has been emphasized in making sure children with disabilities have the same opportunities and chances in gaining the best education. It is believed that every learner deserves the same treatment in education. Many developed countries around the globe have ensured and highlighted inclusive education in their education policy (Amor, et al., 2019). It is believed that every learner has the right to education. The same goes for children with autism; they have the same legal right to an education. However, because of their autistic, children with autism usually struggle to succeed in school and also socially (Nuske, et al., 2019).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopment disorder that affects the crucial area of development which are language and communication, social skills, and behaviour, also interest (Senouci, Obeidat & Ghaouti, 2021). Autism Spectrum Disorder prevalence rate has significantly increased globally (Tiley & Kyriakopoulos, 2021; Satari, Yasin, Toran & Mohamed, 2020) and the disorder is no longer a stranger. Many parents of autistic children in today’s world are starting to get themselves exposed to the knowledge on how to attend to their autistic children. With the increase of prevalence rate, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder have also been getting attention today by researchers all over in the world who have been conducting researches and interventions that could help autistic children with their language learning. Children with autism usually exhibit difficulty in processing sensory information, which consequently affects their learning, especially language learning (Mahayuddin & Mamat, 2019). Despite their disabilities, children with autism also have the right to be included in all areas, including learning English language. With the advancement of technology and the world of the 4th Industrial Revolution, English language has become a global language and inclusive education will be helpful for children with autism to survive in the future. Learning a language is a journey and the journey starts with mastering the vocabulary. Susanto (2017) believed that word knowledge or vocabulary is the foundation for most aspects of language and for achievement. Vocabulary learning is to be considered as a very important part of language learning. Literature has shown that several researchers have attempted to look for possibilities and invented strategies to assist autistic children in their language learning. The use of technology as an assistive technology for autistic children for example. Technology as an assistive technology has been making its waves in Autism Education since early 2012 (Park, Bagwell, Bryant & Bryant, 2021). According to the literature, a number of intervention strategies have been proven successful at helping autistic children with their English vocabulary learning process. Hence, this study intends to investigate stakeholders’ acceptance of the usefulness of the designed and developed mobile augmented reality application for English vocabulary learning of children with autism.
Literature Review

Children with autism are each to their own. Children with autism globally usually encounter the same issues and challenges due to their condition (Ben at al., 2020). Each one of the autistic children has their preferences and learning styles which can be both an advantage and challenge for them as learners. Learning a language on the other hand, is also a challenging process for children with autism (Maulana & Bahruni, 2020; Chu, Tang, McConnell, Mohd Rasdi, & Yuen, 2019). A study of language includes the primary four skills, which are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. One cannot master a language without mastering vocabulary (Salawazo et al., 2020). Especially in English language learning, acquiring vocabulary is a crucial element of the process. The use of English language in today’s world has become common and with the language to be considered as a global language (Zuparova, Shegay, & Orazova, 2020), acquiring the English language is indeed a must have skill. In Malaysia, English language has become the second language and has to be acquired by all students (Kawaguchi, 2021). The language is introduced in the education field as early as at kindergarten level to the tertiary level of education. Be it for typically developed children and autistic children, acquiring English language skills can benefit them in the future with their education and also when they are stepping into the working environment. However, mastering English language will be almost impossible if the learners did not master the vocabulary aspect of the language (Ahsan, Nasir, & Abbas, 2020).

For autistic children, communication skills are not their forte due to their cognitive disability that makes them usually experience difficulties in their ability to articulate their thoughts verbally (Khairuddin, Salleh, & Amin, 2020). They typically encounter communication difficulties which is why most of the time, they resort to non-verbal communication, such as shouting, crying and throwing tantrums. Having them learn a new language, especially English language, is indeed a challenge. Dolah and Chal (2020) believe that in helping children with autism to learn vocabulary, interventions using graphic aids that provide concrete, visual symbols can help to benefit them in their vocabulary learning. There have been many strategies and initiatives in helping children with autism to be able to have a smooth sailing language learning journey. One of the initiatives is the use of technology. The use of technology has been making its appearance in autism education since early 2012 Scassellati, Admoni, and Matarić (2012). There have been many technology-based aids invented as an intervention in children with autism’s language learning process. Past literature has shown that one of the best ways to engage children with autism with language learning is using technology as an intervention. The advancement of technology, teaching approaches have shifted from traditional teaching to modern education supported by technological equipment (Andrunyk, 2020). Gokaydinh et al., (2020) believed that technological developments encourage the production of more informatics-based tools for children with autism and the possibilities provided by technology today are convenient for the use of children with autism.

Recently, the rise of augmented reality technology may conceivably leave an impactful effect on the world of education and offer better approaches in language teaching and learning (Bakhtiarvand, 2021; Cerdá et al., 2020). Contrasted with other technologies, Bridges, Robinson, Stewart, Kwon and Mutua (2020) believed that augmented reality technology is believed of being not only an effective intervention but also practical for use in natural environments. The easy access to augmented reality for children with autism by using old phones makes augmented
reality feasible technology. Many past literature has discovered the use of augmented reality technology for children with autism. Berenguer, Baixauli, Gómez, Andrés, and De Stasio (2020) previously has conducted a systematic review on investigating the impact of augmented reality technology on social, cognitive and behavioral domains in children with autism. Their results have gathered that the majority of findings from the literature support the claim that the use of augmented reality can provide meaningful and enjoyable experiences to children with autism. The use of augmented reality have also been said to be able to help children with autism to feel more motivated in their learning and it allows them to understand more information (Kellems, Charlton, Kversøy, & Györi, 2020). It is believed that technology and innovation currently give more available approaches to produce an efficient hub of rich knowledge for children with autism.

When the literature of technology-based research for children with autism was examined, it can be seen that one of the best technologies that can act as an assistive technology for autistic children is the augmented reality technology. Even though the use and intervention of technology in the world of autism education has evolved since 2012, interventions that involve special education children can be more challenging for researchers. There have been many types of research involving the use of augmented reality technology; however, there has not been much on the use of augmented reality technology for the purpose of ESL learning classrooms.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative study of nature in which the researchers intend to investigate the acceptance and perceptions of the participants on the designed and developed augmented reality mobile application in detail. Researchers believed that the nature of qualitative study can be helpful in answering the objective of this study.

Participants

A total of six participants were involved in this study. The participants came from different backgrounds and fields. They are experts in their field with vast experience in the education field.

Instrument

Semi-structured interview is the instrument employed with seven stakeholders from different backgrounds as the participant. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather their acceptance of the designed and developed mobile augmented reality application to help children with autism with their English language learning process.

Procedures

Interviews were conducted with every participant to gather their acceptance and view on the designed and developed mobile application. A demonstration of the use of the mobile augmented reality application is shown to the respondents. They are needed to evaluate the prototype and then give their thoughts for further improvements. The interview session with the participants varied in terms of duration. It is crucial for researchers to round up each participant’s opinions on the mobile application prototype for further improvements. Their perspective and thoughts on a. The design of the mobile application; b. The technical aspect of the application.
prototype, c. The contents and; d. The pedagogical elements are taken into consideration. The data from the interviews were then later analyzed and presented.

**Findings**

The data from the interviews were then analyzed and the findings are presented in this section. The presentation of this section will start with the findings gathered from the respondents, then later discussed further. The respondents chosen for this study come from different backgrounds and fields. The demographic profile of the respondents is as shown in Table one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Expertise</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. J</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Language learning with technology</td>
<td>Shenzhen Technology University, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. R</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Mobile Learning &amp; English as Secondary Language Learning</td>
<td>Athabasca University, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. RL</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>Art &amp; Design/Multimedia</td>
<td>Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof A.</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>Qassim Universiti, Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. S</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>A private school, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. D</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>A parent of Autism Children</td>
<td>Selangor, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents involved who act as the stakeholders came from different backgrounds. The majority of the respondents are in the education field and are lecturers in technology and mobile learning. There was one respondent who is an English teacher that teaches children with autism and one respondent on behalf of the parents with autistic children. The respondents were to be considered as the stakeholders in this study that could help to play a significant role in providing their thoughts and views on the designed and developed mobile application. All respondents (100%) agreed that the design of the mobile augmented reality application is attractive and suitable for the target group. In this study, the end-users of this designed and developed mobile application are children with autism. The respondents thought that the design of the developed mobile application is appealing and could be helpful to attract children with autism in their English vocabulary learning process.

In addition to that, from the element of the technical aspect of the application, all respondents agreed that the designed and developed augmented reality mobile applications are easy to be used and the interface is user-friendly. With regards to the content and pedagogical aspect of the designed and developed a mobile application, all respondents believed that the content designed are aligned with the Special Education syllabus and they believed that the
application is interesting to be explored as a resource for English vocabulary learning of children with autism. The respondents also provided their views on the strength of the designed and developed mobile augmented reality application and also some recommendations for researchers’ acknowledgment in making further improvements. Specifically, the respondents’ views are tabulated in Table two below.

Table 2. Respondents’ personal views and recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. J</td>
<td>“The use of augmented reality technology can be enticing to young English learners”</td>
<td>“It is necessary to consider the diverse needs of this specific population, including their psychological and physical needs”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. R</td>
<td>“It is well designed and easy on the eyes, while being simple enough for even the most computer or mobile device illiterate person to benefit”</td>
<td>“I believe the designed is simple enough for beginners and can cater to wide range of learners with different learning styles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. RL</td>
<td>“The strength of these apps lies in the personality formed from the character because of the charming and appealing colours. It conveys a friendly message, and the way the character communicates through movement also conveys a straightforward message that is simple to understand”</td>
<td>“Audio effects are vital in providing learning a more meaningful appreciation. Therefore, audio is required to enhance the effect of the characters' movement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof A.</td>
<td>“It is easy for the target group. With some more advanced technological touches, however, it would really be interesting, too”</td>
<td>“Add audio, for pictures alone wouldn't really serve the purpose. Keep the pictures or graphics more attractive”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. S</td>
<td>“It can help the children to gain more focus and to capture their interest throughout the learning process”</td>
<td>“Use more interesting fonts and add more inputs which are more useful that can be used in their daily conversation. Create games that can help the children to understand better. Use the themes which are really exciting to them, like aerospace, road and highways, dinosaurs and so on, because autistic children are really passionate towards such topics”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. D</td>
<td>“I think technology integration can help learners with autism to learn better in the right context”</td>
<td>“There are also other issues to consider, light brightness can cause sensory overload in some. Sensory overload is another thing to consider with technology assisted teaching. They could end up getting distracted rather learning due the sensory overload. It can be done, it is just a lot to consider.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Children with autism typically encounter problems in learning and acquiring vocabulary due to their cognitive disabilities. Although past literature has proven that learners with autism usually tend to grasp English language faster than their mother tongue due to the linguistic aspect of English, children with autism still encounter difficulties in their English language learning process. It is indeed proven that children with autism are different and unique in their own ways. Each one of them has different traits and characteristics that make them different from each other. Due to their uniqueness, each autistic child has different learning styles and preferences.

In their study, Hashim, Yunus, and Norman (2021) have proven that children with autism indeed encounter challenges and issues in their language learning journey. Due to their different behaviors and characteristics, teachers sometimes struggle to try to personalize the learning materials for them. Children with autism learn best via images and augmented reality technology is proven helpful to provide children with autism a meaningful yet fun learning experience. Berenguer et al. (2020) stated that with augmented reality technology, it is easier to provide a platform where virtual and real objects coexist together which allows to improve kinaesthetic and auditory learning for children with autism.

Augmented reality helps children with autism engage and cooperate with the learning materials directly, thus allowing them to connect to the learning process better. Bridges et al. (2020) also agreed that augmented reality technology would help children with autism engage more in their learning process. It is believed that once learners are involved in what they are doing, they tend to be more interested in the learning process. As mentioned by Gokaydin et al. (2020), the utilization of augmented reality technology can help to promote constructivist learning within the children as it gives the children an interactive-based learning condition for dynamic learning. Augmented reality technology will be able to in a way nurture autistic children’s autonomous learning and take more responsibility for their learning process.

Implications and Conclusion

This study is hoped to help children with autism cope with their learning disabilities and help bridge the gap between autistic children and typically developed children in learning. The uniqueness of children with autism is not making their abilities any less than other children. Children with autism will still be able to learn the way typically developed learners learn. It is believed that in helping children with autism to cope with their learning disabilities, one of the ways is by approaching them with materials that are intriguing and can be helpful to them. Augmented reality technology is proven to be one of the most intriguing learning materials as it will help autistic children to connect the virtual and real-life scenarios better (Fatmawaty, Setyaningrum, & Faridah, 2021).

Conclusion

The study intends to investigate the stakeholders’ acceptance and perceptions towards the use of for English vocabulary learning. Augmented reality technology mobile application for children and the findings have gathered that the intervention is indeed able to provide children with autism with a more meaningful learning journey and spark their interest in English vocabulary learning. In addition to that, augmented reality technology applications are also able to contribute to the way children with autism learn daily life skills as well as can facilitate their
understanding of social communicative behaviour. It is believed that the use of augmented reality technology in autism education is a study that is worth venturing into for future research.

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Abstract
The present study investigated the time attitudes (TAs) of EFL learners and their willingness and preference to share their TAs with peers and EFL instructors. Limited research has explored willingness and preference to share their TAs—a distinct and meaningful part of their temporal perspective that encompasses their positive and negative feelings about the past, present, and future experiences of English language learning. Participants were 229 students of technical and administrative diploma programmes at a Saudi industrial college in the western region of the country. Data were collected through questionnaires. Findings indicated that (1) students’ responses differed mostly on feelings about the past; (2) participants are more willing to share their feelings with peers than with instructors; (3) students are more willing to share with both peers and instructors their combined past, present, and future experiences; (4) students prefer to share their feelings about their present experiences with peers and instructors compared to their past or future experiences; (5) students prefer to share with peers both negative and positive feelings about their past, present, and future experiences; and (6) students prefer to share only negative feelings with instructors.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, foreign language education temporal perspective, language learning motivation, language-specific time attitudes

Cite as: Al-Amri, M. N. (2021). EFL Learners’ Language-Specific Time Attitudes. Arab World English Journal, 12(4) 142-152.
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.10
Introduction

Every individual has a unique and personal sense of psychological time. This perception of time is referred to as a person’s temporal perspective (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Individuals’ temporal perspective (TP) influences their decision-making and actions in the present. TP encompasses three temporal periods—the past, present, and future—that originate in individuals’ thoughts and lead them to make decisions and engage in specific behaviours (Mello & Worrell, 2015). Individuals demonstrate different feelings toward each of the past, present, and future as being either more or less significant to their “temporal life space” (Lens, Paixão, Herrera, & Grobler, 2012, p. 322). According to Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), TP is shaped or created depending on an individual’s memory, concentration, and emotion, and individuals acquire a large part of their TP in childhood. During adolescence, people mature, develop their identities, and think about time in novel ways compared to their childhoods (Mello & Worrell 2015; Dörnyey, Muir, & Ibrahim, 2014). Therefore, the literature suggests that temporal understandings of people’s subjective lives that do not recognize this particular feature of an individual’s TP may inaccurately assume that individuals experience and view time in the same or similar ways. This argument shows the importance of capturing and analysing data on the development of children’s TP, and suggests that such work should try to encompass multiple understandings or framings of TPs.

Language learning has been considered a temporal craft due to its time-tied nature (Oxford, 2017). However, the literature on TP has indicated that most studies of TP focus on language learners’ future TP. This focus is related to the dominance of some models of motivation in the literature, such as Dörnyey’s (2005) the L2 motivational self-system, which emphasizes the future dimension in measuring EFL learners’ academic achievement and educational attainment. Indeed, much of the literature does not examine EFL learners’ TPs explicitly, and little has been reported about EFL learners’ TPs. Furthermore, with some exceptions (e.g., Begić & Mercer, 2017), no study explicitly takes a domain-specific approach to explore EFL learners’ feelings towards the past, the present, and the future. This may be because time tends to be relatively unmarked, backgrounded through the use of substantives and is often not commented upon explicitly (Feryok & Mercer, 2017). In addition, to the best of my knowledge, no study has been conducted to investigate EFL learners’ willingness and preferences to share language-specific TAs with peers and instructors. Therefore, the present study seeks to contribute to the wider literature on the psychological construct of TP by examining language-specific TAs—a distinct and meaningful part of their TP that encompasses their positive and negative feelings towards the past, the present, and the future (Mello & Worrell, 2015)—that is separate and distinct from their general TA.

The present study aims to build on previous research and to investigate the TAs of EFL learners and their willingness and preference to share their TAs with peers and EFL instructors. Therefore, this study attempts to draw implications for ELT professionals, in particular, language teachers teaching EFL. It specifically aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are EFL learners’ language-specific TAs?
2. To what extent are learners willing to share their language-specific TAs with peers and instructors?
3. What are learners’ preferences for sharing their language-specific TAs with peers and instructors?
Literature Review

Temporal perspective refers to the way individuals see themselves in relation to the past, the future and other people, and determines the way they act in the present (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). “Time perspective is a central aspect of human daily psychological functioning, with a pronounced impact on human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” (Burzynska & Stolarski, 2020, p. 1). TP as a concept was first used by Lawrence K. Frank in 1939 (Begić & Mercer, 2017). The concept was then expanded by Lewin (1942) to include three temporal periods: the past, the present and the future; for example, Lewin stated that, “the behavior of an individual does not depend entirely on his present situation. His mood is deeply affected by his hopes and wishes and by his views of his own past” (p. 104). Therefore, an individual’s behaviour may be closely tied to that individual’s perspective towards a particular time period (Mello & Worrell, 2015). Also, “the more balanced an individual's TP, the more closely that individual might approach realizing their human potential” (Waller, Franklin, & Parcher, 2020, p. 263).

People who are present-oriented ‘live in the moment’ more and are less likely to believe that planning will be rewarded. They focus only on the immediate present, often without thinking about consequences, and they are far less likely than other individuals to consider the past and future temporal periods. Future-oriented people are influenced by past or present temporal periods in the service of fulfilling their sense of self in the future. Finally, past-oriented individuals focus on their previous experiences and make decisions based on these memories of similar situations; however, all three periods of time for individuals with different orientations must be considered, each of which can be differentiated according to specific dimensions such as orientation and scope. Orientation refers to a person’s focus on the past, the present or the future, while scope implies the distance in which one thinks into the future (e.g., days, weeks, or months). ‘Time scope’ was first referred to by Lewin (1942) as dividing the past and the future into distant (distal) and near-time (proximal) zones. In this respect, these long and short perceptions of time can also vary intrapersonally, as they are potentially interpreted differently by an individual across different situations. For example, a day can be perceived as being long or short in scope depending on a person’s perception of time at that particular point.

TP can be conceptualized as a “multidimensional and developmental” construct that varies among individuals (Mello & Worrell, 2015, p. 126). According to Mello and Worrell (2015), this conceptualization is based on the following three premises. First, a TP can originate within an individual’s thoughts (cognitive) and lead that individual to make particular decisions and engage in specific behaviors (motivational). Second, TP differs as a result of learning and experiences in various contexts. For example, adolescents’ expectations for the future may vary according their socioeconomic status. Third, TP is multidimensional. It may be conceptualized in terms of people’s feelings toward the past, present, and future (that is, their TA); their focus on the past, present, and/or future (time orientation dimension); their perceptions of the relationships between the present, the past, and the future (time relation dimension); the frequency with which they think about the past, present, and future (time frequency dimension); and how they define the past, present, and future (time meaning dimension) (Mello & Worrell, 2015). Together, these multiple dimensions represent the underlying complexity of an individual’s TP.

To my best knowledge, there appears to be only one study, by Begić and Mercer (2017), that explicitly takes a domain-specific approach to examine whether adolescent EFL learners...
have a dominant TP in the language-learning domain that is separate and distinct from their general TP in terms of TA. As argued by the researchers such investigations would be necessary for theoretical and practical purposes, especially regarding motivation. Begić and Mercer (2017) used an online questionnaire consisting of multi-item scales divided into two sections: general and language-specific TA. Participants included 235 EFL learners: 202 from schools in three cities in Croatia, and the remaining 33 from Austria. They ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old. The researchers reported that general and language-specific TAs might be seen as two separate constructs. In addition, the study argued that such investigations would be important for theoretical and practical purposes, especially in regard to motivation. According to the researchers, EFL learners’ TAs may have “a profound impact on how they engage with present learning experiences, interpret their past experiences, and set future goals, all aspects of their language learning lives central to their motivation” (p. 270).

While these studies have highlighted the crucial role the temporal perspective plays in individuals’ lives, as it affects their behavior and motivation, what is missing from this growing body of research on language-specific TAs—a distinct and meaningful part of their temporal perspective that encompasses their positive and negative feelings about the past, present, and future experiences of English language learning is an examination of EFL students’ willingness and preference to share their TAs with peers and EFL instructors. This study aims to address this gap in the literature by investigating the TAs of EFL students of technical and administrative diploma programs at a Saudi industrial college and their willingness and preference to share their TAs with peers and EFL instructors. In doing so, this study attempts to draw some pedagogical implications based on the study’s findings.

Methods

Participants and Research Instruments

Participants were 229 students of technical and administrative diploma programmes at a Saudi industrial college in the western region of the country. There were all students (six sections, with approximately 38 students in each section) enrolled in an English academic writing course, the final required three-credit course in the fourth semester of the three-year technical and administrative diploma programmes. In the previous semester, the students had three two-credit English language courses. They have more English language learning experiences and relations with peers and instructors than other students in other English language courses.

This study used a questionnaire adapted from Mello and Worrell’s (2007) Adolescent Time Perspective Inventory and Begić and Mercer’s (2017) questionnaire, both of which are measures of learners’ TAs. They were adapted, simplified, and translated for the purpose of this study. The adapted questionnaire consisted of twelve five-point Likert-scale items (four items per period: two positive and two negative) (see Appendix One). Additional questions that pertained to the participants’ willingness and preference to share their language-specific TAs with peers and instructors were also included. The internal consistency of the subscales in the questionnaire was checked; all subscales demonstrated acceptable internal consistencies (with Cronbach’s alphas of 0.71, 0.70, and 0.72 for the language-specific past TA, present TA, and future TA subscales, respectively).
The translated questionnaire was given to two Arabic language instructors to check the accuracy of the Arabic phrasing and to two bilingual instructors to check the accuracy of the translation overall. To establish trust, the questionnaire included a statement describing the purpose and aims of the study and assured study participants of their data confidentiality.

**Research Procedures**

The study procedures were in accordance with the ethical guidelines for research with human participants and were approved by the Scientific Committee at the College. Language teachers were contacted by the researcher through the programs coordinators. They were asked to distribute questionnaires to their students, who were informed that their responses would be anonymous and that they would not be required to provide personal information. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no teacher made it compulsory for their students to complete the questionnaire; participation in this study was voluntary. The students completed the questionnaire in their own time and returned it to a designated college teacher.

**Data Analysis**

To analyse the students’ attitudes, descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were calculated based on the participants’ responses. All negatively keyed items were reverse-scored to make them consistent with other items; a score of five was recorded as one, a score of four was recorded as two, and a score of three was left unchanged. Pearson’s r test was used to determine the strength of the relationship between the participants’ general and language-specific TAs. As a five-point Likert-type scale was used in this study, the mean scores were divided into five ranges, which were used to obtain a definite interpretation of the means (see Table one).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00-1.80</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.81-2.60</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.61-3.40</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.41-4.20</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.21-5.00</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings**

**Language-specific TAs**

Table two shows the descriptive statistics of the raw scores of the three subscales. The language-specific present TA (M = 3.43) had the highest mean and the lowest standard deviation (SD = 0.62). Further, the language-specific future TA had the lowest mean (M = 2.53), while the language-specific past TA had the highest standard deviation (SD = 1.58). This indicates that responses differed mostly on feelings about the past; some participants agreed strongly with the items in the subscale, while others disagreed on the same items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time attitude variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Willingness to Share Language-specific TAs

The study found a statistically significant difference at p < .01 in the students’ willingness to share their feelings about English language learning experiences with peers and with instructors for learning support (t[228] = 6.9051, p = 0.00001, d = 0.65). In response to a willingness to share feelings with instructors for learning support, six students responded ‘willing’, 25 responded ‘somewhat willing’, 20 responded ‘undecided’, 121 responded ‘somewhat not willing’, and 57 responded ‘not willing’ (M = 2.14; SD = 1.00, interpreted as ‘low’). In response to a willingness to share feelings with peers for learning support, three students responded ‘willing’, four responded ‘somewhat willing’, 13 responded ‘undecided’, 77 responded ‘somewhat not willing’, and 132 responded ‘not willing’ (M = 2.14; SD = 1.00, interpreted as ‘low’).

In addition, the study also found a statistically significant difference at p < .01 in the students’ willingness to share their feelings about English language learning experiences with peers and with instructors for emotional support (t[228] = 17.06859, p = 0.00001, d = 1.598). In response to willingness to share feelings with peers for emotional support, 113 students responded ‘willing’, 14 responded ‘somewhat willing’, 17 responded ‘somewhat not willing’, and 10 responded ‘not willing’ (M = 3.99; SD = 1.04, interpreted as ‘high’). In response to willingness to share feelings with instructors for emotional support, 13 students responded ‘willing’, 27 responded ‘somewhat willing’, 27 responded ‘somewhat not willing’, and 39 responded ‘not willing’ (M = 2.32; SD = 1.05, interpreted as ‘low’).

Furthermore, the students attempted to share their feelings about English language learning experiences more with peers than with instructors when expecting support. This is significant at p < .01 (t[228] = 10.60814, p = .00001, d = 0.99). When expecting support, the students attempted to share their feelings with peers at a high level; 111 students responded ‘always’, 41 responded ‘often’, 55 responded ‘sometimes’, and 22 responded ‘rarely’ (M = 4.05, SD = 1.05). In contrast, when expecting support, the students attempted to share their feelings with instructors at a neutral level; 20 students responded ‘always’, 61 responded ‘often’, 66 responded ‘sometimes’, 66 responded ‘rarely’, and 21 responded ‘never’ (M = 2.97, SD = 1.13).

Preferences for Sharing Language-Specific TAs

A total of 149 students (65 percent) preferred to share their feelings with peers, 48 (21 percent) preferred instructors, and 32 (14 percent) preferred both instructors and peers. However, in response to the purpose of sharing feelings with peers, 176 students (77 percent) responded emotional support, 24 (10 percent) responded learning support, and 29 (13 percent) responded both emotional and learning support. In contrast, in response to the purpose of sharing feelings with instructors, 181 students (79 percent) preferred to share for learning support, 21 (nine percent) preferred to share for emotional support, and 27 (12 percent) preferred to share for both emotional and learning support.

The students’ preferences for sharing language-specific TAs with peers are detailed in Table 3. A total of 96 students (42 percent) preferred to share all TAs (past, present, and future) with peers. For the other attitude variables, the participants generally preferred to share a combination of two temporal periods with peers. However, only 12 students (five percent)
preferred to share with peers their feelings about the future compared to 18 (eight percent) who were more inclined to share their feelings about the past and 21 (nine percent) who tended to share their feelings about the present. In addition, the participants were less willing to share with peers their feelings about the combination of past and future (n = 20) compared to the combinations of past and present (n = 35) and present and future (n = 27) (Figure one).

Table 3. Preferences for sharing language-specific time attitudes with peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time attitude variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past and Present</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past and Future</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present and Future</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past, Present, and Future</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Preferences for sharing language-specific time attitudes with peers

The students’ preferences for sharing language-specific TAs with instructors are detailed in Table four. A total of 89 students (39 percent) preferred to share all TAs (past, present, and future) with instructors. Regarding the other attitude variables, the participants generally preferred to share a combination of two temporal periods with instructors. However, they had a lower tendency to share with instructors their feelings about the past (n = 14) compared to those about the present (n = 20) and future (n = 19). In addition, the participants had a lower preference to share with instructors their feelings about the combination of past and future (n = 24) compared to the combinations of past and present (n = 30) and present and future (n = 33) (Figure two).

Table 4. Preferences for sharing language-specific time attitudes with instructors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time attitude variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past and Present</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the purpose of sharing with peers, most students (n = 176) preferred to share for emotional support, while 23 preferred to do it for learning support, and 30 preferred to do it for both emotional and learning support. In contrast, regarding the purpose of sharing with instructors, most students (n = 187) preferred to share for learning support, while 20 preferred to do it for emotional support, and 22 preferred to do it for both emotional and learning support.

Lastly, the study also found that most students (n = 146) preferred to share with peers both positive and negative feelings, while 43 preferred to share only positive feelings, and 40 preferred to share only negative feelings. In contrast, regarding sharing with instructors, most students (n = 136) preferred to share only negative feelings, while 56 preferred to share both negative and positive feelings, and 37 preferred to share only positive feelings.

**Discussion**

The results of this study indicate that EFL learners highly appreciate their peers’ feelings about their past, present, and future experiences of English language learning. They also feel appreciated by both peers and instructors for their feelings about their English language learning experiences. However, to seek emotional support, they are more willing to share their feelings about such experiences with peers than with instructors. Most of them frequently interact with their peers and prefer to share their feelings with them only for emotional support. These findings may be attributed to the emotional effects of peer relationships, which are highly influential in adolescence (Berk, 2001). In contrast, to seek learning support, most EFL learners are more willing to share their feelings about English language learning experiences with instructors than with peers. Further, they prefer to share such feelings with them only for learning support. This may be attributed to the traditional view of the role of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge whose only function is to instruct.

Moreover, the present results also suggest that most learners are more willing to share with both peers and instructors their combined past, present, and future experiences of English
language learning. This finding is in line with previous results indicating that older adolescents focus on all three periods in the language domain (Begić & Mercer, 2017). However, learners are less willing to share their feelings about the combination of past and future experiences with peers or instructors compared to the combinations of past and present or present and future. This may be attributed to the argument that adolescents are more aligned with the present (Bowles, 1999; Mello & Worrell, 2006). More learners prefer to share their feelings about their present English language learning experiences with peers and instructors compared to their past or future experiences. In addition, regarding sharing their past and future English language learning experiences, learners are more willing to share their feelings about future experiences with instructors than with peers, with whom they are more willing to share their feelings about past experiences. This may be attributed to learners’ tendency to share their feelings about their past English language learning experiences with peers for emotional support and to share their feelings about future experiences with instructors for future learning support.

Furthermore, the study suggests that most learners prefer to share with peers both negative and positive feelings about their past, present, and future English language learning experiences. As argued above, this may be attributed to strong peer relationships. However, most learners prefer to share only negative feelings with instructors. In other words, in their relationship with instructors, learners mainly capitalize on their negative feelings about their English language learning experiences. This may be due to their less balanced and supportive relationship with instructors (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

The present findings have potentially important implications for English language teaching and learning. Emotional support from peers represents acceptance, approval, and esteem (Sica, Crocetti, Ragozini, Sestito, & Serafini 2016). However, efforts should be made to encourage students to capitalize on their strong personal connections with peers to improve their English language learning. In other words, emotionally high-level peer relationships can draw students into English language learning and promote their desire to learn (assuming appropriate guidance from the instructor) (López & Aguilar, 2013). Further, more efforts should be made to raise both students’ and teachers’ awareness regarding the benefits of sharing language-specific TAs and to provide more opportunities for students to share not only negative feelings but also positive feelings with instructors. Such efforts can open students to new language learning possibilities, making them feel more capable of learning and developing their skills. This can help build strong personal student–teacher relationships, which can lead to better student performance on learning tasks and tests. Students who have close, positive, and supportive relationships with their instructors are more likely to trust their instructors, feel motivated by their praise, engage in learning, participate in class, and achieve at higher levels academically compared to those students with less personal and frequent contact with their instructors (Frisby & Martin, 2010).

**Conclusions**

To conclude, the present study investigated the TAs of EFL learners and their willingness and preference to share their TAs with peers and EFL instructors. Limited research has explored willingness and preference to share their TAs—a distinct and meaningful part of their temporal perspective that encompasses their positive and negative feelings about the past, present, and future experiences of English language learning.
Significant differences were found in this regard. The findings suggest that all three time periods are of equal importance, which needs to be more consciously considered in EFL instruction, especially with regard to motivation. Efforts should be made to raise both EFL instructors’ and learners’ awareness of sharing language-specific TAs to help learners develop a more balanced and supportive relationship with peers and instructors, which could play a significant role in the domain of English language learning and teaching.

This study has some limitations. As the participants were from a single college in Saudi Arabia, the results may not be generalizable to other contexts. Future studies could overcome this limitation by surveying a more diverse sample of EFL learners, which would help researchers explore possible differences across contexts. In addition, test–retest analyses could help researchers determine the stability and reliability of EFL learners’ self-perceptions and self-reported responses. Further, this study may encourage other researchers to investigate whether students’ willingness and preference to share language-specific TAs with peers and instructors are related to different variables such as academic achievement/English proficiency level, age, and gender. Furthermore, this study used the questionnaire as the main and only tool for collecting data. Future studies should use both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Lastly, this study was limited to ascertaining EFL learners’ perspectives. More research is needed to further investigate the sharing of language-specific TAs from the perspective of instructors.

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References


Appendix One: Likert Scale Items of Language-Specific Time Attitudes

1. My previous experiences of learning English make me sad.
2. I feel excited to think about my past use of English.
3. I had negative experiences in the English language classroom.
4. My past experiences of learning English make me excited.
5. I am satisfied with my present knowledge of English.
6. I am not satisfied with my present use of English.
7. I feel excited about my present use of English.
8. I doubt I can use English right now.
10. I doubt I will use English fluently.
11. I feel happy when I think about my future use of English.
12. I feel nervous when I think I will use English in the future.
The Voice of Learners on English Literary Texts: Passing on the Mantle

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Abstract  
This study examines how pre-service teachers assess the appropriateness of literary texts used by high school students in terms of learners' age, linguistic needs, and language proficiency. It also aims to determine the relevance of the texts used to learners' cultural understanding. The participants in this study were five pre-service teachers who participated in a content analysis study of five literary texts. They analyzed the content of the texts using the four categories of textbook evaluation criteria proposed by Tomlinson (2001), namely, media-specific criteria, content-specific criteria, learner-specific criteria, and language criteria. The evaluation results were positive. All participants agreed that all five texts were appropriate for high school learners, with average levels of compliance ranging from moderate to appropriate. In addition to selecting texts that are appropriate for the learners' language level, the topics and issues addressed in the texts should also be appropriate for the learners' interest, so the selection of literary texts is crucial. Finally, more local texts should be selected for the English literature curriculum to highlight local cultures and practices. It is expected that this study will contribute to English language teaching as the findings of this study will provide necessary information to those who are concerned with the selection of appropriate literary texts for schools. In addition, this study will raise awareness among teachers and curriculum designers of the need to consider learners' level of competence when evaluating and selecting from the many literary texts available.

Keywords: content analysis, evaluation, literary text, literature, textbook, cultural background, language proficiency, curriculum designers

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.11
Introduction

In March 2000, the Malaysian Ministry of Education recognized the role of literature as an important factor in improving learners' English proficiency and language skills. This was done by reintroducing literature into the Malaysian English language curriculum as a taught and tested component for all high school learners in Malaysia (Sivapalan & Subramaniam, 2008). Classroom teachings use the given literary texts, including selected poems, short stories, novels, and drama. This interest in bringing different texts and materials into the classrooms is an effective way of promoting positive perception among the learners in learning English. However, this move will improve the learners' interest and perception if only the literary texts used are attractive and understandable by all the learners.

For this study, we shall evaluate the literary texts used by Form Four learners (upper secondary education usually aged 16 and above) at selected high schools in the south of Malaysia. These learners used a set of selected texts, which mainly consist of two poems, two short stories, and a drama. If the Ministry of Education decides the literary texts relevant to the context of Malaysia, these texts could shape learners' ways of thinking and character development.

For this reason, the texts thus must be assessed and evaluated following specific standardized criteria of English language material evaluation (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014). As such, this study will shed some light on the suitability of the selected texts. The benefits of introducing literature into the English language classroom in Malaysia can only be realized through a careful and deliberate selection of texts that are suitable for language learning. To enrich learners, it is essential to select texts that learners can reflect on and think about. According to Kebede and Milkitie (2018), when looking for literary works for language teaching, it is important to examine not only learners' motivation for the texts but also the cultural context and language of the texts. Collie and Slater (1990) suggested that text selection depends on “each particular group of learners, their needs, interests, cultural background and language level” (as cited in Kebede & Milkitie, 2018, p. 1001). If the content is interesting enough, it will provide a new perspective on topics relevant to the learners' concerns.

A text that is deemed to be a close fit with the learners' cultural values might not only elicit more in-depth responses from them but can also emphasize the necessity of recognizing and extending learners' perspectives on various cultures and world views. According to Kebede and Milkitie (2018), learners might quickly lose interest and motivation while reading and using literary works in the English language, mainly when dealing with complex and difficult-to-understand topics and ideas. These will result in a significant inability to integrate the target language into literary works for teaching (Kebede & Milkitie, 2018).

Thus, the selection of texts should constantly consider the demands and levels of competence of the learners. Tevdosvka (2016) asserted that teachers, educators, and curriculum designers, especially those involved in curriculum development and design, should focus their attention on considering factors such as learners' age, language level, and background knowledge. Another factor to consider in the selection of texts is thematic consideration, which
encourages the use of specific topics that appeal to learners' interests and maturity levels. Human relationships such as kinship, friendship, or familial love, growing up, life problems, nature, patriotism, conflict, adventure, and science fiction are some of the topics that should be covered (Abdullah & Hashim, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study is to assess the appropriateness of literary texts for Form Four (high school) learners in southern Malaysia. The research questions are:

1. To what extent is the level of suitability of literature texts assigned to high school learners associated with the learners' age, linguistic requirements, and language competence?
2. How relevant are the text themes to the learners' culture?

The researchers chose to focus on the study of literary texts for Malaysian high schools for various reasons. First, we work as English teachers in higher education and schools where we noticed the challenges that teachers face when using literary texts. In addition, during the actual teaching and learning process, we noticed that learners had difficulties in understanding the context of literary texts. We believe that these issues could imply that specific literary texts were not appropriate for the learners’ background and language abilities.

This study should contribute to English language education primarily in selecting literary texts for high school learners. It is hoped that this study can shed some light on the possible factors in the selection and evaluation of literary texts and provide insights for those concerned with the selection of appropriate literary works for use in schools. Furthermore, this research will raise awareness among teachers and curriculum designers about the need of considering learners' competence levels when evaluating and selecting literary works from available lists.

**Literature Review**

Literature in the English language began to be acknowledged as one of the sources for learning languages during the last twentieth century. Previously, it was noted that from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, the process of English teaching was primarily overlooked by the advanced discourse method, which demonstrates progressive, pragmatic language learning techniques with the primary goal of developing learners' communication abilities and operational skills (Hall, 2005). There was limited opportunity for creative development, especially in the context of language education.

It was not until the middle of the 80s that some scholars and language practitioners began to include the aspects of literature as valuable language learning materials after those long days of desertion (Maley, 1989). This phenomenon is seen by referring to the long list of literary publications that began making their way in paving the comeback of literature in the language classroom (Gower & Pearson, 1986 as cited in Khatib, Derakhshan, & Rezaei, 2011).

The worth of authenticity that literature holds in its input for language acquisition since it is deemed authentic content is one example of what is viewed as an advantage of utilizing literature in the classroom. According to Calafato & Gudim (2020), literary texts can meet the requirements for textual authenticity since literary works are authentic and were not explicitly created for use in textbooks. Maley (1989) further contributed to this fact by claiming that literary texts such as novels, dramas, and even poems are written with themes and content that
revolve around a variety of non-trivial issues while providing the reader with real, authentic input that has a personal connection and affects the individual.

Authenticity and sincerity, which are inherently present in literature, are essential factors in language acquisition, particularly in classrooms. This is seen in drama conversations, sentiment expressions, functional phrases, and views in contextualized utterances (Khatib, et al., 2011). As Calafato & Gudim (2020) reported, literary texts are often the most important link to other cultures for learners who do not have the opportunity to interact with native speakers of the target language. The same is true for novels and real-life works based on the creative and artistic nature of the individual.

**Literary Texts in the Malaysian Curriculum**

Literature textbooks aim to introduce and provide learners with the necessary knowledge and information about the variety of literary texts in the English language. High school learners in Malaysia are not only provided with a standard English language textbook, but also literature textbooks. This category of literature component textbooks includes various literary works such as poetry, drama, and short stories. A novel is added to the literary content for a higher-level group of learners, aged 13 to 17, in addition to the literature textbooks. The selected texts could be both written by local authors or translated foreign literary works. It is said that the comprised texts which make up a textbook, are instead an essential tool in learning a language because, according to O’Keeffe and O’Donoghue (2015), textbooks have a significant influence in promoting a specific type of curriculum. However, it must be organized purposefully, gradually from the content to its structure, as they are highly significant for the promotion of a specific vision of curriculum.

It was only in March 2000 that the Malaysian Education Ministry mandated the inclusion of literature in the curriculum. All learners must read literary works. Consequently, a fixed selection of prescribed poetry, novels, short stories, and drama are the primary text types used in Malaysian schools. However, the absence of other types of literary texts such as excerpts from dramas or even a whole range of English language works that deal with issues beyond the conventional norm, such as wars and the sense of nationalism for one's country or homeland, is evident from the text selection (Chitravelu et al., 2008, cited in Sanub & Yunus, 2016). Ghazali et al. (2009) in their study pointed out that language teachers and curriculum writers invest a lot of time in selecting and designing their materials to reduce the gap between learners' difficulties in understanding the texts they use and ensuring that literary texts are within local and cultural boundaries. Furthermore, teachers and syllabus writers must decide which adapted foreign texts to include, the goals of the chosen materials, and the alignment of activities that may be done to delve into the texts to encourage the development of language abilities.

**Criteria for Literary Texts Selection**

According to Gopal and Mahmud (2016), text selection is a crucial component in making literature a distinct tool for language acquisition, self-enrichment, and cultural appreciation. According to Maley (1989), language learners may soon face several problems if they do not understand the factors to be considered in selecting appropriate literature (as Khatib et al., 2011). For instance, as Mussa & Fente (2020) reported, the language level of the texts makes it difficult for learners to cope with them and the culture portrayed in them is far from their socio-cultural background, which makes it difficult for them to understand the texts (p. 1209). Therefore, it
should be emphasized, that selecting texts is generally a difficult task for teachers and syllabus writers. According to Khatib et al. (2011), those involved in selecting literary texts should be particularly cautious about such essential and crucial elements as language learners' competence, age, gender, and learner's prior knowledge, which should be the rules for literary text selection. In their study of the level of suitability of literary texts used by high school learners, Arshad, Othman, and Chew (2009) discovered that cultural backgrounds, experience, and expectations should be considered in addition to the listed criteria. Degwale & Gashaye (2020) also argued that literary texts provide a broad range of possibilities to learn multi-dimensional uses of the language, demonstrating the need to choose relevant literary works for language instruction.

Most researchers believe that besides choosing and selecting texts that cater to language learners' level of proficiency, the theme and issues discussed should be in line with learners' interests. As a result, it is critical for instructors, educators, and curriculum designers to select texts for the English language syllabus that are diverse in terms of genres, topics, and learners' language levels.

**Methods**

In this current study, the researchers employed a qualitative approach to collect and analyze the data. The descriptive qualitative approach is based primarily on its sense of inductiveness, which focuses on the specific situation, and emphasizes word form rather than numbers (Maxwell, 2012). It was determined that the data identified in this study would be analyzed using content analysis in the form of a description. Content analysis is a type of document analysis that examines written, spoken, or visual communication messages. The texts under analysis include two poems, *Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred and Lord Tennyson, *The Living Photograph* by Jackie Kay, two short stories, *Tanjong Rhu* by Minfong Ho (Singapore) and *Leaving* by M.G. Vassanji, and a drama text, *The Right Thing to Do* by Martyn Ford.

**Research Instruments**

The research instrument used in this study was a self-constructed evaluation checklist, adapted and modified from Lathif (2015). The structure of the list was suggested by Tomlinson (2001, pp. 30-32), Cunningsworth (1995, pp. 15-17), and Mukundan, Nimchisalem, and Hajimohammadi (2011, pp. 104-105) based on the established criteria for quality textbooks. Some items were deleted, and, or modified. Others were classified into more specific categories, and a few new ones were developed to meet the study's requirements.

The checklists were distributed to five research participants who had previously received pre-service training. They analyzed the texts based on content, presentation (media), student criteria, and language use. Additional comments from participants in the comments section of the checklist were examined to provide further insight and information about their views of the texts. To preserve the originality of the texts studied, all wording and terminology discovered during the analysis were accurately referenced when discussing the results.

**Data Analysis**
As a data analysis method, descriptive statistics were used to sum the total scores from all five participants for each assessment item on the given checklist, which were then converted to percentages. In the assessment checklist, P1 (Poem 1) refers to the poem, *Charge of the Light Brigade*, P2 (Poem 2) refers to the poem, *The Living Photograph*, SS1 (Short Story 1) refers to the short story, *Tanjong Rhu*, SS2 (Short Story 2) refers to the short story *Leaving*, and D1 (Drama 1) refers to the drama, *The Right Thing to Do*. We calculated the scores so that we could obtain the mean score for each sub-aspect. The average scores for the scales in the instruments are presented as follows.

**Results**

The following description presents the findings of this study.

**Suitability of the Literary Texts**

The table below illustrates the suitability of the literary texts in terms of the learners' age, linguistic needs, and language competence.

Table 1. Evaluation results on student-specific criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Student-specific criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.17</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>54.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mean Score (%)</td>
<td>73.61</td>
<td>84.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one shows the text evaluation results for student-specific criteria. Two texts were categorized as "fair." The poem *Charge of the Light Brigade* with an overall average fulfillment score of 73.61%, and the short story *Tanjong Rhu* received an overall average fulfillment score of 77.78%. The other three texts: the poem *The Living Photograph* with 84.03%, the short story *Leaving* with 86.12%, and lastly, the drama text *The Right Thing to Do* with a mean score of 89.58%, are classified as "good," by the participants.

From the analysis of the poem, *Charge of the Light Brigade*, three sub-criteria from the student-specific criteria are classified as "good," namely the appropriateness of learners’ age (87.50%), the presentation of how each text was able to support learners’ reflection and
evaluation of themselves (83.33%), and the presentation of how each text can encourage pupils to internalize diverse principles to promote a sense of connection to the homeland, nation, and country (87.50%). Other sub-criteria that are classed as "sufficient," include the chance of learners being interested (54.17%) and the degree of student involvement (54.17%), while the sub-criteria of the presentations of each text in reflecting the logical and coherence decision path scored (75.0%) which is considered as "fair."

A study on the poem The Living Photograph found that four sub-criteria are classified as "good," namely the appropriateness of learners’ age (100%), the likelihood of interest to the learners (100%), and the presentation of how each text can support learners’ reflection and evaluation of themselves (100%). The other three sub-criteria, which are the engagement level between learners (75.0%), the presentations of each text in reflecting the logical and coherence decision path (75.0%), and the presentations of how each text can encourage pupils to internalize diverse principles to promote a sense of connection to the homeland, nation, and country (54.17%) are categorized as "sufficient."

Likewise, a review of the short story, Tanjung Rhu shows that only one out of six sub-criteria is categorized as "sufficient," namely the likelihood of interest to the learners (54.17%). In contrast, the engagement level between learners (66.67%) is categorized as "fair." The other four sub-criteria are "good," which are the appropriateness of learners’ age in par with the text (87.50%), the presentations of each text reflecting the logical and coherence decision path (83.33%), the presentation of how each text can support learners’ reflection and evaluation of themselves (87.50%), and the presentation of how each text can encourage pupils to internalize diverse principles to promote a sense of connection to the homeland, nation, and country (87.50%).

Similarly, the analysis of the short story Leaving shows that three out of five sub-criteria were rated as "good," namely, appropriateness for learners' age (100%), presentation of how each text can support learners' reflection and self-evaluation (95.83%), and presentation of how each text can encourage students to internalize various principles to foster a sense of attachment to the homeland, nation, and country (83.30%). Three out of five participants rated SS2 as "fair," e.g., learner engagement (75.0%), the likelihood of learner interest (79.17%), and presentation of individual texts reflecting logical and coherent decision-making (85.0%).

As for the drama text The Right Thing to Do, the participants categorized it as "good," in terms of the student-specific criteria scoring. It can be seen in the overall results for this category, which averaged 89.58%. The sub-criteria on the appropriateness of learners’ age reached 100% on scoring. In contrast, the other two sub-criteria, which are the likelihood of interest to the learners, and the presentations of each text in reflecting the logical and coherence decision path, recorded 83.33% on its evaluation score. The other two sub-criteria of the level of engagement between learners and the presentation of how each text can support learners’ reflection and evaluation of themselves both scored 91.67%. For the item, the representation of how each text can lead the learners towards the internalization of insight on diversity values for promoting the sense of belonging to the motherland, nation, and country achieved the mean score of 87.50%. 
Table 2. Evaluation results on language criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>SS1</th>
<th>SS2</th>
<th>D1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2) Language criteria</td>
<td>Density, pace, level of language clarity</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>91.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The suitability of the language used (word choice) with the student's cognitive development.</td>
<td>70.83</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The texts arrangement based on the difficulty level</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>91.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The standard of English language use of the texts is under the language rules</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>91.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The use of the English language which is appropriate to accommodate the process of communication learning</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mean Score (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.17</td>
<td>95.00</td>
<td>92.50</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>95.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two displays the text evaluation results for language criteria for each literary text. The results show that the participants recorded their somewhat positive responses. Looking at the overall mean, only the poem *Charge of Light Brigade* is rated as "fair" on the language criteria, with an overall compliance rate of 79.17%. The other four texts, *The Living Photograph*, the short story *Tanjong Rhu*, the short story *Leaving*, and the drama *The Right Thing to Do*, are "good," with 95.0%, 92.5%, 87.50%, and 95.0% respectively. This result indicates that all the texts are suitable for learners in terms of language criteria.

Table 3. Evaluation results on content-specific criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>SS1</th>
<th>SS2</th>
<th>D1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3) Content-specific criteria</td>
<td>The conformity connecting the themes of the selected texts and the planned themes in the curriculum</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suitability of issues, genre, and theme found in the texts</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>91.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount of background and cultural knowledge required to comprehend the texts</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>79.17</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>58.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The authenticity level of the texts</td>
<td>95.83</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>87.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The items in Table three examine participants' views of the content of the texts. From the data shown, *Charge of The Light Brigade* is rated as "fair," by participants with a fulfillment level of 76.67%. Participants rated *The Living Photograph, Tanjung Rhu, Leaving,* and *The Right Thing to Do* as "good," with scores of 89.17 percent, 83.33 percent, 85.83 percent, and 80.0 percent, respectively. The results indicate that the participants had a positive opinion of the content of the texts.

Table 4. *Evaluation results on media-specific criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Media-specific criteria</td>
<td>The appropriateness of the fonts</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The presentation of illustrations or graphics which are functional and relevant with the materials as learners' visual support</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Mean Score (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in Table four explore the participants' opinions of the fonts and illustrations in the texts. Based on the data presented, all five literary texts assigned to the Form Four learners are rated as "good," as they achieve an average compliance rate of 100%, 87.50%, 91.67%, and 95.84% respectively. This shows that all the texts met all the two sub-criteria in this area of assessment, namely, appropriateness of fonts (all the texts scored 100%) and presentation of illustrations or graphics that are functional and relevant to the materials as visual supports for the learners.

**Discussion**

To analyze the relevance of selecting appropriate literary texts for learners, it is essential to examine the results of the overall assessment for all texts, including all four areas: learner-specific criteria, language-specific criteria, content-specific criteria, and media-specific criteria. From the data obtained, it can be deduced that the selection of appropriate literary texts is important for learners mainly in four areas.

Concerning the first area of evaluation, student-specific criteria for selecting appropriate texts for learners are intended to increase learners' engagement level with the text. This is because learners' interest in the subject matter or the issues discussed plays a significant role in determining the learners' readability level of materials. From the findings, all participants agreed that the learners could engage well with the texts.

The second importance concerning the proper text selection in terms of the language area from the checklist is to assist learners with manageable learning materials following the interims
of language difficulty. The language used should be only one level beyond a student's language competence (Tevdoska, 2016). This also ought to ease learners' process of comprehending the texts and teachers' process of delivering the literature contents. Participants pointed out that some low-ability learners find it difficult to understand the poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* due to complex words such as 'dismayed' and 'blundered'.

Content-specific is another important criterion for selecting literary texts because learners need to be familiar with the culture in the texts. Culturally standard texts or with local cultures will facilitate learning better because new and unfamiliar or wrongly assumptions on cultural points and practices may not suit learners' level of comprehension and conception. Furthermore, Lathif (2015) found that learners are more engaged in the teaching and learning process when resources are tailored to the learners' local culture. In the case of these textbooks, all five participants agreed that the content of the texts was appropriate and relevant to the learners.

Finally, the media-specific criterion is an essential criterion for text selection because it facilitates learners' comprehension of any text or written material they read. In this study, all five participants agreed that the size and length of the font used in all texts were appropriate for secondary learners.

By analyzing the study's findings, the research objectives were addressed in the study. The first research question was to determine the extent to which the literary texts were appropriate for high school learners in terms of age, linguistic requirements, and language competency. Poem 1, *Charge of the Light Brigade*, poem 2, *The Living Photograph*, short story 1, *Tanjung Rhu*, short story 2, *Leaving*, and the drama text, *The Right Thing to Do* were the five texts examined. The study's findings indicated that all the participants who evaluated the texts agreed that the key characteristics that should be considered during the selection of literary texts are authenticity, interest, entertaining, and being impactful to some extent. This should be done within the bounds of the learners' language skills.

According to Maley (1989), individuals involved in the selection of literary texts should pay special attention to essential and vital factors, including language learners' skills, age, gender, and prior knowledge. Unawareness of these factors while selecting appropriate literature texts may cause issues for language learners (Khatib, Derakhshan, & Rezaei, 2011). All of these are strong arguments to do a literature text review to identify areas for development and change in the educational system. It should be emphasized, however, that if the assessment reveals that the text does not meet the stated requirements to meet the needs of the learner, the teacher has a clear signal that another text material should be chosen.

The second research question was to determine the relevance of the text themes to the learners' culture. The study reveals that the participants viewed the texts to be culturally appropriate for the learners' understanding. They agreed that the chosen texts were not too unfamiliar with the local culture. Tevodskaya (2016) stated that it is critical to ensure that the literary works selected are culturally recognizable and approachable to both learners and teachers. Masyilah and Ciptaningrum (2018) shared a similar viewpoint, stating that when materials are chosen, they should include the learners' culture to engage learners in the teaching
and learning process and to serve as a medium for learners to maintain their local and national identities.

Conclusion

Before concluding, we would like to point out the limitations of this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the literature texts used by high school learners are appropriate. We found that the results of the study may not be generalizable to all high school learners in the country due to the small sample size which includes two poems (Charge of the Light Brigade, and The Living Photograph), two short stories (Tanjong Rhu and Leaving), and a drama text entitled The Right Thing to Do.

This study aimed to assess the suitability of the selected literary texts through the pre-service teachers' lenses who have undergone practical teachings in schools. The comments by the pre-service teachers that led to this evaluation then illustrate their viewpoints on literary works and the difficulties that may arise when utilizing these texts to teach English. It is believed that since teachers are the actual implementors of the texts in the English classroom, their evaluations, standpoints, and perspectives may contribute to the current study to raise the standard of English instruction.

Overall, the findings revealed that the study results came out relatively positive in which all the five texts are considered suitable for the learners. Besides choosing and selecting texts that cater to language learners' level of proficiency, the theme and issues discussed should be in line with learners' interest, thus making the selection for literary texts with the target learners in mind is essential.

We discovered that many themes recurred throughout the texts, including nationalism, the maintenance of traditions and ways of life, and family relationships, and the need to support one another. Although the texts addressed themes of family relationships, cross-cultural interactions, and the formation of ethnic and cultural identity hierarchies, they did not bring the Malaysian perspective into the classroom, nor did they promote inter-ethnic engagement.

These findings are consistent with those of Pillai et al. (2016), who found a narrowing of the space for local Malaysian literature in English, with none of the writings expressing ethnic diversity or cultural points within the Malaysian environment. The fact that the mandated texts provided to the learners are all either modified or taken directly from books and written materials from other countries might be a contributing factor.

The inclusion of only Eurocentric texts confirms the privileging of Western texts over local literature. The learners may find it challenging to connect the texts to their own experiences and way of life (Kebede & Milkitie, 2018). As a result, books must first be assessed to verify their appropriateness for learners in Malaysian schools in terms of cultural factors. As a solution to this issue, the inclusion of local Malaysian literature in the teaching of inter-ethnic interaction in Malaysian schools is suggested. To promote the latter, classroom activities will focus on encouraging learners to interpret literary texts as openings to the various cultural spectrums in which they live and to build knowledge about the ways of experiencing, learning, and ultimately
understanding the many cultural worlds that exist both within and outside the familiar environment (Pillai et al., 2016).

**Acknowledgments** The research is funded by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia under the research grant no. Q.J130000.2606.18J41.

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**Reference**


Degwale, Y. & Gashaye, S. (2020). Representation of Literary Texts in English for Ethiopian Textbooks and Their Practice in the Classroom: Grade 9 and 10 in Focus. Theory and
The Voice of Learners on English Literary Texts

Abdul Samat, Azmi, & Abdullah

Practice in Language Studies, 10 (6), p. 623-631.


Effects of Language Variety and Word Availability in Commercial Advertisements on Listener’s Lexical Recall

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Abstract
Commercial advertisements in Arabic-speaking regions tend to alternate between dialectal Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic, but it is not yet clear whether language variety has any impact on listener’s lexical recall. Insight into this issue should help enterprises design their commercial advertisements in a linguistically intelligent manner. This study addresses two questions: 1) How does language variety (dialectal vs. standard) affect listener’s lexical recall in commercial advertisements? 2) Do listeners recall words that have appeared in dialectal advertisements better than those that did not appear in advertisements using the same variety? Fifteen Saudi participants responded to a forced-choice memory test with 24 yes-no questions (3 per advertisement) asking participants to report whether they heard a specific key word in eight advertisements that utilized different language varieties. The findings show that Arabic speakers tend to perceive both Modern Standard Arabic and dialectal Arabic in commercial advertisements similarly, but tend to recall the presence of a key word in an advertisement better than its absence. Future research may increase the sample size and examine more Arabic varieties.

Keywords: commercial advertisements, dialectal Arabic, memory, Modern Standard Arabic, language variety, lexical recall

Introduction

Many enterprises use commercial advertising with the aim of selling certain products or persuading consumers to use particular services in a competitive and dynamic market (e.g., Erickson 1985; Korgaonkar, Karson, & Akaah 1997; Yang, Ahn, & Han, 2013). Differences in the language varieties and speech characteristics used in such advertisements are expected to have an influence on cognitive processes and memory recall. Voices in advertisements are usually human, and humans have different vocal tracts that shape their production. Yet, people are capable of perceiving and comprehending speech produced by different speakers through a process of speech normalization (Johnson, 2005), which filters speech to allow listeners access to a representation in the mental lexicon (see e.g., Krulee, Tondo, & Wightman 1983; Johnson, 2005; Johnson & Sjerps, 2021). Researchers continue to study the impact of additional factors such as speech rate (e.g., Rodero, 2019), gender (e.g., Rodero, Larrea, & Vázquez, 2013), pitch (e.g., Rodero, Potter, & Prieto, 2017), and accent/language variety (e.g., Birch & McPhail, 1997; Lalwani, Lwin, & Li, 2005) on cognitive processing in general, and cognitive processing of commercial advertising in particular. Cognitive processes are tied to an individual’s capacity to store, comprehend, and recall information. An essential component of cognitive processing is memory recall, for example, lexical recall. Episodic theory suggests that perceptual details are kept in memory and are fundamental to later speech recognition (see e.g., Goldinger, 1998).

The impact of language variety on lexical recall in commercial advertisements has been examined in other languages such as English and Chinese, but to the best of our knowledge there is no empirical study (other than our conference presentation, Algernas & Aldholmi, 2021, May) that has compared the impact of the use of dialectal Arabic (DA) (specifically, Najdi Arabic) vs. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) on listener’s lexical recall in commercial advertisements. Put differently, there is a lack of guidance from the Arabic linguistic literature on the importance of language variety selection in commercial advertisements. Considering the diglossic status of Arabic in Saudi Arabia where people are exposed to DA more than MSA in daily conversations, we would expect that MSA advertisements should have a different impact than DA advertisements on an audience’s recall of content presented to them, and that the (un)availability of a key word in the advertisement should be different in the two varieties. This potential impact is critical for enterprises designing a product advertisement, because if a variety is more likely to result in better recall of brand name and information, then we would expect designers to make choices to prefer such a variety. Hence, the outcome of this study (as well as future studies) should aid businesses in determining the variety of language they should utilize in their commercial advertisements.

We pose two research questions with related hypotheses, as stated below.

Research question 1: How does language variety (DA vs. MSA) affect listener’s lexical recall of commercial advertisements?

Hypothesis 1: listeners will remember words from advertisements that use DA better than words from advertisements that use MSA since studies have shown that listeners have better recall of a familiar accent over time (Bottriell & Johnson, 1985).

Research question 2: Does the (un)availability of a key DA vs. MSA word in the advertisement have any impact on a listener’s lexical recall?
Hypothesis 2: listeners will recall words that have appeared in the DA advertisements better than those that did not appear in advertisements using the same variety, since previous studies have shown that standard varieties have a negative impact on memory recall (Morales et al., 2012).

**Literature review**

Research has identified several factors that influence memory recall of product name and other relevant information in advertisements. One factor that may be predicted to affect the recall process is speaker *gender*. Leung and Kee (1999) examined the impact of male voiceover on the recall of brand names and found that using male “celebrity voiceover in TV commercials is effective for facilitating recall and comprehension on information associated with the advertisement” (p. 89). Two important facets of their findings must be noted here. First, this facilitatory effect on recall is only effective within a short lag; that is, the impact of male celebrity voiceover in advertisements on recall emerges only when it is measured right after the participants have been exposed to the advertisements. Second, they found no significant difference between males and female participants’ ability to recall brand names. Rodero et al. (2013) also explored how the gender of voices can contribute to the effectiveness and recall of the messages from radio advertisements in Spain. Due to some gender-related assumptions that favor male voices in Spain, a male voice was expected to be more persuasive and to attract attention more than a female voice in a commercial advertisement. However, their findings did not support the effectiveness of a male voice for level of recall of an advertised product.

Another factor that is related to the gender of a voice is *pitch*. Rodero et al. (2017) compared the number of correct words recalled across four intonation patterns and found that commercial messages with pitch variations, compared to those with a homogenous pitch, have a positive impact on recall and memory. A third factor that has been researched in detail as having an effect on a listener’s memory of advertisements is *speech rate*. Rodero (2019) explored the effect of using three different speech rates (160, 180, and 200 words per minute) in advertisements on short-term memory. He concluded that using a moderate speech rate results in the highest level of correct lexical recall, while fast and low speech rates have low levels of lexical recall. Some other studies have attempted to test these two factors simultaneously. For instance, Chattopadhyay, Dahl, Ritchie, and Shahin (2003) examined whether pitch or/and speech rate (among other characteristics) enhance or reduce a listener’s response to advertisements. Specifically, among other dependent variables, the participants had to recall information about the brand mentioned in the advertisements. The results show that a low-pitched voice is preferred when the announcer is male, that accelerated speech rate could be an important element for advertising effectiveness, and that the two factors in question exhibit interaction effects.

Especially in international contexts, another important component of speech in commercial advertising is *language variety* or *accent* (e.g., Domzal, Hunt, & Kernan, 1995; Hornikx & van Meurs, 2020). This factor has been well studied in English (e.g., Birch & McPhail, 1997; Lalwani et al., 2005; Reinares-Lara, Martín-Santana & Muela-Molina, 2016). For instance, Lalwani et al. (2005) examined the effect of Standard English vs. Singaporean English on consumers’ attitudes towards advertisements. The authors distinguished between products of domestic origin and products of foreign origin and the results of their study confirmed the impact of language variety (as well as product origin) on the audience’s attitudes towards
advertisements. A later study (Morales, Scott, & Yorkston, 2012) examined the impact of accented English (American) vs. Standard English (British) on both consumers’ recall for products and services as well as their evaluations of them. Interestingly, the results show that Standard English did not positively impact the listeners’ memory but rather lowered brand recall. Domzal (1995) found that nonnative words “have the capability of enabling advertisements to be noticed more, processed deeper, and remembered more readily than equivalent advertisements using no foreign words” (p. 100).

Although this type of research has covered a variety of languages such as Swahili (Mutonya, 2008), Mandarin (Liu, Wen, Wei, & Zhao, 2013), and German (Hendriks, van Meurs, & Behnke, 2019), much of the literature is devoted to different varieties of English in particular, including British, American, Australian, Singaporean, Indian, and Asian Englishes, particularly in terms of Standard vs. Nonstandard (accented, foreign, or colloquial) English. Nevertheless, the differences between some of these varieties (such as American vs. British or British vs. Australian) are not as substantial as the differences between MSA and DA. Only a few studies have tested the impact of Arabic varieties (e.g., Gully, 1996) or English vs. Arabic vs. Arabinglish (e.g., Nickerson & Camiciottoli, 2013; Sobh, Singh, Chun, & Benmamoun, 2018) on listeners’ perception of, reactions towards, and recall of advertisements or the messages they deliver. However, most of the existing studies on Arabic either focus on written/print advertisements, examine foreign vs. native language, use theoretical discourse-based approaches, and/or took a non-linguistic perspective.

**Methods**

**Stimuli**

The stimuli used in the present study consisted of eight carefully selected auditory MSA and DA commercial advertisements. The number of advertisements is less than that used in previous studies such as Rodero et al. (2017) and Rodero (2019) which used 16 and 12, respectively. However, the number of advertisements per condition is the same as in these studies. The present study compares only two conditions, MSA vs. DA, with four advertisements per condition, while Rodero et al. (2017) have four conditions (four intonation levels, four advertisements per condition), and Rodero (2019) has three conditions (three speech rates, four advertisements per condition). Stimuli selection was based on a strict criterion that included only the advertisements that differed in language variety but were similar with respect to advertisement length, narrator gender, number of narrators, speech rate, pitch, product familiarity, and presentation modality.

All advertisements were similar in length (MSA $M=58.25$, $SD= 2.2$, DA $M= 54.5$, $SD= 4.0$, MSA & DA $M= 56.37$, $SD= 3.66$), and any advertisement that did not fill in that range was excluded from the stimuli. This length is almost double the length reported in Rodero et al. (2017), but as the task is less challenging in the current study (lexical recall in which the participants were only asked to judge if they heard a lexical item or not) than the one in their study (word recall, in which the participants were asked to type as many recalled words as possible). Second, all of the advertisements in both varieties were produced in a male voice for the sake of consistency and to avoid gender effects. Third, only one talker appeared in each advertisement; none involved multiple talkers. Fourth, speech rate was controlled with all advertisements having almost the same range of words (MSA $M=99.25$, $SD= 7.9$, DA $M= 105$, $SD= 13.0$, MSA & DA $M= 102.375$, $SD= 10.82$) and hence similar speech rate (MSA $M=1.7$,
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$SD = 3.5, DA M = 1.9, SD = 3.2, MSA & DA M = 1.81, SD = 3.0$ words per second). Fifth, pitch is also taken into consideration in the present study. At the discretion of the experimenters, pitch featured high and low variations in all advertisements. Sixth, all advertisements were for products and services that our participants would have been rarely exposed to as an attempt to prevent any prior familiarity effects. The participants were asked to report if they had previously heard any of the advertisements, and all responses were negative (i.e., no participant had heard any of the advertisements). Note that the advertisements were originally in visual form, but were converted and presented to participants in auditory form in order to avoid any confounding effect from the visuals and to allow participants to focus only on the speech presented to them. This also makes our design more similar to the studies reviewed above that examined various language aspects in audio commercials.

Participants

A convenience sampling was used to recruit the participants. The researchers announced the study to graduate students in the Department of Linguistics at King Saud University and called for participation in an online experiment. The recruitment script stated the target sample (native speakers of Najdi Arabic who have no hearing issues) and provided some basic information about the study. Fifteen participants ($n=15$) volunteered to participate in this study. All participants were native females who speak both MSA and the Najdi dialect of Arabic. It was necessary to use only one gender type to avoid any gender effect between the participants and the announcers/talkers in the advertisements. Participants were asked to report demographic information including their education, age, and speech- and hearing-related issues. All participants had a tertiary level of education, and participant age varies from 19 to 28 ($M=22.4$). None of the participants reported any hearing impairments.

Task, Procedures, and Instruments

A forced-choice memory test in the form of a yes-no question was implemented. Each participant was asked three questions per advertisement (making up a total of 24 questions) about whether she had heard a certain word in the presented advertisements or not. The three questions were of three types: one question was about a key word that did appear in the advertisement (available), another question was about a word that did not appear in the advertisement (unavailable), and one question was a distracter to reduce the likelihood that participants discover the goals of the study. The key words in the questions were varied in that they appeared in different positions (beginning, middle, and end) in the advertisements, and were semantically related to the theme of the advertisement. The advertisements were presented in audio format, not in their original visual form, as explained above.

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic during which this study was undertaken, the experiment was conducted remotely over a period of three days. Each participant was asked to join a Zoom meeting individually and share her computer screen so that the experimenters could monitor the experiment’s execution. In each meeting, the task and its procedure were explained to the participant. The order of the advertisements within and across language varieties (MSA vs. DA) and of questions (available vs. unavailable vs. distractor) was completely counterbalanced, and different participants encountered different orders. Each advertisement was played only once, and participants were allowed 30 seconds to provide an answer for each question,
following Rodero et al. (2017). The average length for each meeting was approximately twenty minutes.

**Findings**

Each participant answered 24 questions to provide a total of 360 responses. Note that a third of the trials (120) were distractors and hence their responses were excluded. This leaves a remainder of 240 responses for analysis. As shown in Figure 1, the accuracy rate (proportion of correct answers) was 83.33% (100 out of 120) and 82.5% (99 out of 120) for DA and MSA advertisements, respectively. A binomial repeated-measure logistic regression with language variety and word (un)availability as two predictor variables and responses as a predicted variable was performed. The logistic regression model revealed no statistically significant effect of language variety, [Wald χ2 (1) =.088, p = .767, 95% CI (-.536 -1.116)].

![Figure 1. Accuracy rate broken down by language variety](image)

As can be seen in Figure 2 below, the accuracy rate was higher for the available condition (86.67%, 104 out of 120) than for the unavailable condition (79.17%, 95 out of 120). The binomial repeated-measure logistic regression revealed that word availability was a statistically significant explanatory factor in the participants responses. [Wald χ2 (1) =.4.251, p = .039, 95% CI (-.979-.283)].
Looking into details, the accuracy rate for the *available* condition was 85% in MSA and 88.33% in DA, whereas the accuracy rate for the *unavailable* condition was 80% in MSA and 78.33% in DA. However, the logistic regression model revealed no evidence for statistically significant interactions between the two variables, [Wald $\chi^2 (1) = .598, p = .439, 95\% CI (-1.381 -.599)]$.

**Figure 2.** Accuracy rate broken down by word (un)availability
Looking into details, the accuracy rate for the *available* condition was 85% in MSA and 88.33% in DA, whereas the accuracy rate for the *unavailable* condition was 80% in MSA and 78.33% in DA. However, the logistic regression model revealed no evidence for statistically significant interactions between the two variables, [Wald $\chi^2 (1) = .598, p = .439, 95\% CI (-1.381 -.599)]$.

**Figure 3.** Accuracy rate broken down by language variety and word (un)availability

**Discussion**

Our first question asks whether Arabic speakers better recall advertisements that utilize either one of the two varieties under investigation, namely MSA and DA. The first set of the findings
shows that language variety, as indicated by the statistical test output, is not a factor affecting lexical recall; hence, our initial hypothesis that people usually remember words from DA advertisements better than they remember words from MSA advertisements is disconfirmed. Although the present work is similar to previous studies discussed above, there are notable theoretical and methodological differences that should be pointed out.

First, previous studies focused on the impact of foreign vs. native language (rather than standard vs. nonstandard variety) on recall and found that nonnative words result in better recall. For example, Domzal et al. (1995) showed that advertisements that use foreign words are more notable and memorable than those that do not use foreign words. Petrof (1990) also supports this claim, demonstrating that American participants better recalled messages in French advertisements than in English advertisements (as cited in Hornikx & van Meurs, 2020). Similar results were found when Korean consumers were presented with English advertisements (e.g., Ahn & Ferle, 2008). One would expect that a similar effect would appear for a standard variety presented to speakers of a dialectal variety, especially in a diglossic situation in which the differences between the standard variety and the dialectal variety are substantial, as is the case in Arabic. However, this did not emerge in the present findings, probably because the status of MSA is not comparable to the status of a foreign language (regardless of the position one takes with respect to whether MSA is a native language for DA speakers). Nevertheless, we should note that while some studies support the privilege of a foreign language in advertisements, other studies have found that “the complexity of a foreign language hinders recall because an utterance in a foreign language is less strongly linked to the underlying concepts in the mind” (Hornikx & van Meurs, 2020, p. 86). Neither of these two differences appeared in the findings on MSA vs. DA advertisements. Hence, an alternative explanation is considered below.

Studies that focus on standard vs. nonstandard varieties seem to be more relevant and comparable to the current work. Morales et al. (2012) hypothesized that although people perceive standard accent as being more correct and prestigious, people devote more attention to the accent itself rather than to the content of a message, consequently having a negative impact on recall. Our findings do not support a similar hypothesis. There is a notable methodological difference, specifically in the task used, between Morales’s et al. (2012) study and the present study. Several previous studies, including Morales et al. (2012), ask participants to recall the specific brand name or the copy body message that appeared in a presented advertisement (e.g., Domzal et al., 1995; Luna & Peracchio, 2001). In the present work, the participants were asked to recall a key word that either appeared or did not appear in the advertisement. This task may have reduced the impact of language variety, because it is not easy to maintain the distinction between a MSA lexical item and a DA lexical item.

The second question asked whether the (un)availability of a key DA vs. MSA word in the advertisement may have any impact on a listener’s lexical recall. Our second hypothesis was partially confirmed. The participants were better able to recall the words that appeared in the advertisements than those that did not appear. However, our distinction between word (un)availability in MSA vs. DA was not borne out. Recall of lexical items that were available in advertisements was better than that of lexical items that were unavailable in advertisements regardless of language variety. However, we believe that when a word that had been presented to the participants appeared again in the question posed to the participants, participants recognized
the items and hence were less confused than when they were not exposed to the items. This distinction between *recall* and *recognition* has been a topic of debate in the field of memory in general and in advertising studies more specifically (see e.g., Du Plessis, 1994, for an overview). However, that is not the focus of the current study.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, this study has attempted to examine whether Arabic speakers better recall words from advertisements that utilize either one of two varieties, MSA vs. DA, and whether the (un)availability of a key DA vs. MSA word in the advertisement may have any impact on a listener’s lexical recall. The findings show that Arabic speakers tend to perceive both MSA and DA in commercial advertisements similarly and that the variety used in advertisements does not seem to have any impact on their recall of the advertisement content. Moreover, the results show that Arabic speakers recall the availability of a key word in an advertisement better than its absence, regardless of whether the word is MSA or DA. This study provides preliminary findings, despite some limitations. First, the data collected in this study was limited to only eight advertisements and sixteen trials per participant. Potentially, with more advertisements, a difference between MSA and DA with respect to lexical recall may emerge. Second, the sample size was limited and constrained by the global COVID-19 pandemic during which recruiting participants was an especially hard task. These two limitations could have affected our statistical analysis and findings and therefore conducting this study at a larger scale is highly recommended.

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**References**


Effects of an In-house Entry Test on the Post-Foundation Students at an Omani College of Technology

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Abstract:
This paper reports the findings of a study that investigated why a large number of test-takers show a low performance in four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) offered in an entry test used by a College of Technology in Oman to place students in advanced diploma and bachelor’s degree programs. The main research question was meant to find out what difficulties the test takers face in the three tests (Listening, reading, and writing) in two semesters. The study analyzed the entry test results for two semesters including survey results obtained from the test takers regarding the difficulties experienced by them in the three tests and an analysis of writing answer scripts. The findings indicate that most test takers were not qualified enough to pursue their studies in the advanced diploma or bachelor’s degree programs due to their low performance in the entry test. The findings, moreover, suggest that the current placement test poses difficulties for most test-takers. Therefore, based on the findings, the possible reasons for the low performance of the test takers and the fairness of the entry test are explicitly discussed and finally, suggestions and recommendations for addressing the issue of the current entry test are offered.

Keywords: Foundation programs, Low performance, Omani learners, Placement test, Proficiency level

Cite as: Samaranayake, S. W. (2021). Effects of an in-house entry test on the Post-Foundation Students at an Omani college of technology. Arab World English Journal, 12 (4)
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.13
Introduction

The Colleges of Technology in Oman come under the purview of the Ministry of Manpower and they are one of the higher education institutions that conduct professional courses leading to a certificate, diploma, higher diploma, and bachelor’s degree in Engineering, Business Studies, and Information Technology. Seven colleges have been strategically established in different provinces to provide Omani youths with education and training facilities that will help them to become skilled professionals in their chosen field of specialization in the future. The study programs at the Colleges of Technology (CoTs) allow students to pursue their studies beyond certificate and diploma levels provided that they meet the language proficiency level required in the post foundation. For the students to be placed in the advanced diploma and bachelor’s degree programs, a placement test (In-House Entry Test) is conducted every semester and students should receive a band 4-four to be eligible to study in the advanced diploma level while a band 4.5 is required to study in the bachelor’s degree program as per the notice issued in connection with the student placement in the post foundation programs by the Ministry of Manpower (MoM). In-House Entry Test (IHET) consists of three test papers (listening, reading, and writing) excluding speaking and these papers are prepared by a specialized committee established at the Higher College of Technology (HcT), Muscat, and delivered the examination papers to the other six colleges each semester. Given the importance of higher education at the colleges of technology, In-House Entry Test (IHET) plays a key role in that it decides whether a student can pursue his/her education beyond the certificate level or end at the certificate or diploma level. The colleges of technology conduct the IHET examination for the students who are eligible to take the test and release the results to the respective candidates. However, at the college level, there is no specific training course offered for the students intending to sit for the IHET except advising students to refer to the college website which provides test takers with learning materials and guides relevant to the IELTS exam (English Language Magazine, 2016, p. 21).

Even though, the scenario of the current IHET remains undebated, it seems to have pernicious effects on the college level students who want to pursue their studies in higher education because many test-takers either fail or show low performance in the exam every semester. Thus, the IHET remains a barrier for most students who complete their diploma courses in their chosen specializations (Annual Report of ELC, 2016). As a result, they do not qualify to enter the advanced diploma or bachelor’s degree programs in their specializations. Oman is one of the Gulf countries that suffers a shortage of skilled and experienced labor force. Oman Daily Observer has reported that Oman currently hosts nearly 1.8 million expatriate workforce while 14,000 Omanis are looking for jobs (“Expatriate Must to Meet Skill Shortage,” 2014). When the country has faced such a huge skill labor shortage, depriving the higher educational opportunities of Omani youths for want of mere English language competency can be unfair. Given the context stated above, the current study aims to address what negative effects are experienced by the post foundation students at this college of Technology where the researcher worked for five years, in particular, and the other six colleges of technology in general.
Literature Review

It is an undeniable fact that students wishing to pursue their higher studies in a local or international educational institution should have a requisite English language proficiency level to meet the linguistic demands imposed by the respective study programs. To this end, most universities in English-speaking countries demand that students seeking admission to those universities should have an IELTS band or TOFLE scores to be included in a particular study program a student has applied to.

The demand for higher education delivered in the medium of English has increased dramatically in the past few decades. At present, it is evident that not only the number of international students seeking admission to study in English-speaking countries are on the rise but also the English-medium universities established in non-English speaking countries, particularly in the Middle East (Wait & Gressel, 2009). Such universities have relied on international tests of English language proficiency, such as IELTS and TOEFL to assist in making decisions relevant to the language proficiency of the applicants. However, these tests have no ‘passing’ scores. Therefore, higher education institutions are left to make their judgments about the level of English language proficiency that international students must demonstrate to be admitted to a particular study program an applicant has applied for. Various studies have investigated issues related to the IELTS exam as an entry test in different teaching contexts across the world and most of them found that students faced difficulties in getting a required band to be qualified for admission in a higher education institution either locally or internationally (Bellingham, 1993; Philips, 1990; Shaw, 2000). This study will not discuss the pros and cons of IELTS as an entry test in a broader sense. However, it attempts to evaluate how fair is the entry test given to the test takers of the colleges of technology to place them in either higher diploma or bachelor’s degree programs (Engineering, Business Studies, and Information Technology) which is not related to their chosen specialization field. The following section will describe the research problem which will be followed by the research question.

Research Problem

The annual report compiled by the English Language Centre (ELC) in 2015-2016 of this College of Technology (Annual Report of ELC, 2016) includes statistics about all examinations conducted by the center. This report indicated that the performance of the test-takers in the In-House Entry Test (IHET) was far below the expected standard levels in the three skills (Listening, reading, and writing). Moreover, the researchers, who happened to work as invigilators and assessors of IHET for the last four years, observed that some students did not understand the written questions clearly in that they tended to ask the invigilators for an explanation. A condition of this nature can be ascribed to irrelevant cognitive barriers to the performance of test-takers. According to ETS International Principles for the Fairness of Assessment (2016, p. 5), “Unfair barriers may occur when knowledge or skill not related to the purpose of the test”. As noted above, when the In-House Entry Test remains as an unfair barrier for most test takers of the colleges of technology in Oman, a news report published in the Times of Oman in 2016 says that more than 10,000 students dropped out of colleges during the academic year 2014-15 (“Oman-education,” 2016). The data was quoted from the Higher
Education Admission center. Even though the report stated that personal issues were the most common reason for dropping out of college, students' difficulty to cope with the education level they confront in higher education institutions nowadays has been emphasized as a specific reason. Given the specific reason as stated above, it can be assumed that there can be some effects of examination systems administered in the colleges of technology on college students’ dropout.

Given the condition described above, the researchers decided to investigate why most test-takers fail or show low performance in the IHET, what difficulties they face in the three tests (Listening, reading, and writing), and how this problem can be addressed to minimize the failure rate in IHET. With the premise that investigating the IHET and its impact on the test-takers will help researchers to suggest ways and means to address the problems relating to IHET, the following research question was formulated.

**Research Question**
1. Did the test takers find the three tests (Listening, reading, and writing in IHET) difficult in both semesters?

It is evident that past research which investigated the results of different types of entry tests including IELTS conducted in tertiary level education institutions suggest that the test results of the test-takers in both English speaking and non-English speaking contexts (Arrigoni & Clark, 2015; Breeze & Miller, 2011) in general are not positive. Therefore, based on the premise stated above, the following hypothesis will be investigated in the current study.

**The Purpose of the In-House Entry Test**

The colleges of technology use the IHET to place post foundation students in the advanced diploma and bachelor's degree programs where students should receive a band of 4 or 4.5 to be placed in an advanced diploma or a bachelor's degree program respectively. Each of the colleges of technology conducts the IHET as a part of their study programs every semester.

**The Structure of the In-House Entry Test**

As per the details included in the college website (http://www.shct.edu.om/content/house-entry-test), the test takers for the IHET should be second-year diploma and advanced diploma students studying in semesters 2 and 3 in their specializations. The test papers of the IHET are prepared by a specialized committee set up at the Higher College of Technology (HcT) in Oman and delivered the testing materials to other colleges of technology (CoTs) at the beginning of every semester specifying the exam dates and times. The listening, reading, and writing tests of the IHET are assessed by the English language lecturers of the respective colleges using the answer keys (Listening and reading) and writing rubrics issued along with the exam guides by the HcT. When assessing the answer scripts of IHET, double marking is used to ensure the reliability of the results.

The IHET consists of three parts that intend to measure students’ abilities in three skills (listening, reading, and writing) excluding speaking skills. These three skills are tested within 80
minutes in which listening and reading are allocated 20 minutes each while 40 minutes are given to answer one question in writing. The listening test has 15 questions with two parts. In part 1, test takers are required to listen to a conversation and a lecture or a part of a lecture and select the correct answer from the options given and in part 2, test-takers listen to a lecture and complete some notes in the outline provided with no more than three words or numbers. Other specific instructions for listening include that the recordings are heard only once, spelling mistakes are penalized, and 5 minutes are given at the end of the listening test to transfer their answers to answer sheets.

The reading test is comprised of one passage with 15 questions with three test types which should be answered in 20 minutes. The writing test includes one topic which should be attempted in 40 minutes with 250 words. Test takers are supposed to write a discussion essay or an argument essay about the topic provided.

The information included in the college website, moreover, states that the test takers should be familiar with the IELTS Academic Module 2 since the task type and format of the writing question in the in-house entry test is similar to IELTS Academic Module Task 2 (http://www.shct.edu.om/content/house-entry-test).

Objectives of the Research
By conducting this research, the researchers hope to achieve the following objectives:
1) To investigate whether the IHET was difficult for the test-takers in both semesters.
2) To suggest possible measures that can be used to address the problems of the current IHET.

Research Methodology
The research was conducted using the quantitative method in which a quantitative framework, more specifically a quasi-experimental design was used. The data for analysis was obtained from two In-house Entry Tests, a survey questionnaire, and an analysis of 48 writing answer scripts selected randomly from two in-house entry tests. The answer scripts were analyzed for quality (see below for more information) because the writing was marked subjectively using rubrics while listening and reading answer scripts were not needed to analyze since they were marked objectively. The questionnaire included two sections: the first section was meant to obtain information relating to how they fared in the tests (Behavioral questions, Dörnyei, 2007) while section B dealt with some attitudinal questions which asked participants to tell how they should be supported in the IHET. The questionnaire was sent to 150 test takers who appeared for IHET during the first and second semester respectively and their responses were quantitatively analyzed to determine whether their low performance in the test had resulted due to the difficulty level of the test or their inadequate knowledge of the language skills and insufficient training for the test.

Questionnaire
The researchers developed the questionnaire which included two parts. In the first part, the researchers wanted to find out how the participants fared in the three tests (Listening, reading,
and writing) in IHET. Therefore, part 1 carried closed-ended 20 items which were designed in line with the Likert Scales and meant to elicit how and what they exactly did to get the scores reported in the three tests. Part 1 included items relating to listening, reading, and writing skills while part 2 included 6 closed-ended items which were meant to elicit their ideas and opinions (attitudinal questions) about how the English Language Centre (ELC) should help learners perform better in the three tests in IHET. The participants for the survey questionnaire were selected using a random purposive sampling technique (Laerd Statistics, n.d.; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The questionnaire was distributed among 150 participants who were selected as follows: every sixth participant from each group (each group consisted of 30 students) was selected from 30 groups that took the IHET test during the first and second semester of 2016-17, totaling 150 participants. The completed questionnaires were received, and they were analyzed quantitatively to determine whether there was a link between the test takers' behavior in the test and the results.

Examination of Marked Writing Answer Scripts

Tayler (2004) has argued that by analyzing actual samples of writing performance, we can understand more about key features of writing ability across different proficiency levels and within different domains. As Tayler (2004) has observed, the researchers analyzed 48 samples of writing scripts drawn from the IHET exam conducted in the second semester to understand better of writing performance of test-takers. 48 samples of marked writing answer scripts were selected (three from each) from 16 groups and they were analyzed qualitatively using T-Unit analysis (Elola, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 1978). Specifically, the quality of writing was established using an error-free T-unit ratio (EFT/T) (in which the EFT/T is calculated as the total number of error-free T-units in a given piece of writing divided by the total number of T-units) (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 2001). This analysis helped the researchers to decide the extent to which the test takers’ rating in the questionnaire for the writing task was similar or different. To prevent gender bias, marked writing answer scripts were drawn from both male and female students who sat for IHET in the second semester of the 2016-17 academic year. However, it should be noted that no marked answer script was selected for qualitative analysis from the first semester IHET exam because the researcher felt that analyzing 48 marked writing answer scripts from the second semester would be enough to understand how they fared in the writing test. Three marked writing answer scripts were drawn from each group based on the scores ranging from the highest, middle to the lowest, and they were re-checked against the writing marking criteria without allocating any mark.

Participants of the Study

The participants in the current study were second-year diploma and advanced diploma Omani students studying in semesters 2 and 3 in their specialization programs in the post foundation level during the academic year of 2016-2017. These students were between the ages of 20 and 23 and were both male and female and they had already studied the foundation level English program which consists of speaking, listening, reading, grammar, and writing for 4 semesters. Therefore, it is assumed that the students who study in the second-year diploma and
advanced diploma programs will have adequate English proficiency in the four skills to function well in the post foundation programs in which the students are required to study their specialization programs in English.

**Findings Related to the Research Question**

The research question concerned with whether test-takers find the three tests (listening reading, and writing) difficult in the IHET in two semesters of 2016-2017. To find out the test takers’ performance during the two semesters, the researchers analyzed the test takers’ marks for the three tests. The number of test-takers and the scores they obtained in each test for two semesters are illustrated in the figures (1-6) below.

![In-House Entry Test scores (Listening) 2016/17 Semester-1](image)

*Figure 1. In-House Entry Test results for listening skill in the first semester of 2016/17*

As shown in Figure 1, 408 test-takers from 14 groups appeared for the IHET in the first semester (September-December 2016) and each group consisted of 30 test-takers except one group which had only 18 students. 14 percent scored a 0 on the listening test, while 17 percent scored a 1. Out of all listening test-takers, 22 percent scored a 2, whereas 18 percent scored a 3. 13 percent scored a 4 while 5 percent scored a 5. Only 2 percent scored a 6 and a 7 while 0.4 percent scored an 8 and a 9, but no test taker scored a 10. However, 0.2 percent scored an 11, but no candidate scored a 12, a 13, or a 15 in the listening test.
In terms of reading as illustrated in Figure 2, 11 percent scored a 0 and 5 percent scored a 1 out of 15 for the reading test. 12 percent scored a 2 while 16 percent scored a 2, but 22 percent could score a 4. Meanwhile, 14 percent scored a 5 and 8 percent could score a 6. However, 4 percent scored a 7 and 2 percent scored an 8 indicating a downward trend. Only 4 percent of test-takers scored a 7 while 2 percent scored an 8. 0.7 and 0.2 percent scored a 9 and a 10 respectively, but no test taker scored a 12. Finally, 0.2 percent scored a 13 with no candidate scoring a 14 or a 15 for the reading test.

When it comes to writing, Figure 3 indicates that 7 percent scored a 0 and no test taker scored a 1 to 3 in the writing test. 0.4 percent scored a 4 and 0.7 percent scored a 5, but 1 percent scored a 6. Moreover, 0.7 percent scored a 7 and gradually rose to 3 percent which scored an 8. When it came to a 9 score, the percentage was only 1.2 percent scored a 10 while 1 percent scored an 11.
4 percent scored a 12 and 13, but only 0.7 percent scored a 14. However, 6 percent of test-takers out of 408 scored a 15. 5 percent scored a 16 and the percentage for the scores 17 and 18 was 8. However, 7 percent scored a 19 while 5 percent scored a 20 and then the percentage fell to 3 where the score was 21. 6 percent scored a 22 while 3 percent scored a 23, but only 2 percent scored a 24. However, when it came to a 25, the percentage rose to 3 and then onwards, a fall in percentage can be observed. 1 percent could score a 26 and 27, whereas 0.2 percent scored 28 and 0.9 percent scored a 29 indicating the highest score for the writing test out of 40. No test taker scored 30 to 40 with no percentage to be recorded.

Figure 4. In-House Entry Test results for listening skill in the second semester

As shown in Figure 4 above, 466 test-takers from 16 groups sat for the In-House Entry Test during the second semester (January - April 2017) and each group consisted of 30 test-takers except two groups in which there were 29 and 17 students respectively. According to the test results, 8 percent scored a 0 on the listening exam, while 6 percent scored a 1. Out of all listening test-takers, 20 percent scored a 2, whereas 24 percent scored a 3. 19 percent scored a 4 while 12 percent scored a 5. Only 6 percent scored a 6 and 1 percent could score a 7 while 0.8 percent scored an 8, but only 0.2 percent scored a 9. However, no candidate scored a 10 or beyond 10.

Figure 5. In-House Entry Test results for reading skills in the second semester
In terms of reading as illustrated in Figure 5, 10 percent scored a 0 and 9 percent scored a 1 out of 15 for the reading test. 18 percent scored a 2 while 22 percent scored a 2. 21 percent could score a 4. Meanwhile, 10 percent scored a 5 and 3 percent could score a 6. However, 2 percent scored a 7 and 0.6 percent scored an 8 indicating a downward trend. Only 0.6 percent of test-takers scored an 8 while 0.2 percent scored a 9 and no test taker scored a 10 or beyond 10 as was done in the listening test.

![Figure 6. In-House Entry Test results for writing skill in the second semester](image)

Figure 6. In-House Entry Test results for writing skill in the second semester

As indicated in Figure 6, in terms of writing, 7 percent scored a 0 and no test taker scored a 1 to 4 in the writing test. 0.2 percent scored a 5 and 9 percent scored an 11, but 0.4 percent could score a 12. Moreover, 1.9 and 1.7 percent scored a 13 and 14 respectively. From 3.4 to 10% showed a gradual rise in scores. 2.5 percent scored a 15 and 3.4 a 16 while 4 percent scored a 17. 6.4 could score an 18 and 8.5 a 19. When it came to a 20, there was 9.2 percent while 10 percent scored a 21. From then onward, a gradual decline of scores was indicated. 9.6 percent scored a 22 and 9.8 a 23, but 7.2 percent scored a 24, whereas 4.5 percent scored a 25 while 4 percent could score a 26. When it came to a 27 and a 28, the percentage was only 2.3 and 2.5 respectively. 1.5 percent could score a 29 while 0.6 percent scored a 30 and a 31. 31 was the highest score scored by 0.6 percent of test-takers out of 466. No test taker scored beyond 31 until up to 40.

**Discussion of the Findings Related to the Research Question**

As discussed above, the research question dealt with whether the test takers found the three tests in the IHET difficult in both semesters and how they performed in the three skills in two semesters. To answer the research question, the researchers hypothesized that the
IHET test takers found the three tests difficult in both semesters. As indicated in Figure 1 above, it was clear that the test takers’ performance in the listening test in the first semester was so low that 14 percent scored a 0 while no candidate scored a 12 or beyond 12 despite the test consisting of 15 questions which should be attempted in 20 minutes, unlike the IELTS test which has 40 questions with 30 minutes without transfer time. If the percentage of zero scorers is converted into the number of students out of the total number of test-takers (408), one will find that 57 students could not score a single mark for the listening test. Likewise, if the percentage of students who scored the highest marks (11 out of 15), is converted into the actual number of students out of the total number of test-takers, one may find that only 8 students out of 406 could score 11 marks out of 15 in the listening test.

Figure 4 indicates the results of the listening test in the second semester and a comparison of the statistics between semester one and two results showed that the number of test-takers increased in the second semester (466) from (408) in the first semester. 37 students out of 466 scored a 0 in the listening exam while 9 students could score a 9, but no student scored beyond 9. The statistical information indicated that test-takers did not perform well in the listening test in IHET in both semesters.

In terms of reading as shown in Figure 2, it is evident that test-takers did not perform well in the reading test too. Out of 408 test-takers, 44 students scored a 0 for reading while 8 students scored 13 marks out of 15 and no student got marks beyond 12. When it comes to the second semester, the situation in reading seems to have gotten worse because 46 students scored a 0 while 9 students scored a 9 out of 15, and no student scored beyond 9 in the reading exam in the second semester.

Unlike other skills (speaking, listening, and writing), students in this college generally spend more time on reading. Excluding the time spent at school studying English, these students have already spent 4 semesters in the foundation program with roughly 568 hours of studying reading and another 4 semesters in the post foundation program. Despite all this, students’ performance in reading remained low below the expected level.

Concerning the results of writing in IHET, it needs to be stated that 28 students out of 408 scored 0 out of 40 marks while 3 students scored a 29 and no student scored beyond 29 in the first-semester exam. In the second semester, 32 students out of 466 scored a 0 out of 40 and 3 students scored a 31 indicating the highest score in the IHET in the second semester. When comparing the writing scores in the first semester with that of the second, it was evident that the number of zero scores was greater in the second semester than in the first. Overall results of both IHET indicated that there was no improvement in test takers' performance on all three skills. Given the low performance of the test-takers in both semesters, the researchers were prompted to explore whether the test-takers found the IHET difficult and it is to this dimension the researchers now turn.

As noted above, to investigate the linguistic difficulties experienced by test-takers, the researchers conducted a survey questionnaire in which the test takers were asked to rate how they answered questions in three tests. According to the results of the survey, 48% found listening difficult while only 4% found the test easy. In terms of reading, 30%
recorded that reading was difficult while 14% found it easy and writing was the most difficult of the three tests where 42% recorded that it was difficult while 18% found it easy. Moreover, skill-wise item analysis in listening further indicated that only 35% of the test takers agreed that they understood the main idea and specific factual information in the monologue and dialogue while 65% disagreed indicating that they did not understand. When it comes to reading, 37% agreed that the reading texts were easy for them to read and understand the main idea. However, 63% found the reading texts difficult. Concerning writing tasks, 65% did not know how to organize an argument essay while 35% agreed that they know how to organize an argument essay. When asked about using cohesive devices and transition words/phrases, 73% said that they did not use cohesive devices or transition words/phrases in their essay. In the same task, 67 percent of the test takers reported that they did not pay attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuations while writing, whereas 33% agreed that they paid attention to the above aspects.

Part 2 of the questionnaire sought to find out ways and means through which the ELC could help test takers perform better in the IHET. 83% strongly agree that ELC should conduct IHET preparation classes while 17% remained neutral. Another statement was that ELC should select a few teachers who are proficient in providing test takers with academic advice on the three specific skills (Listening/Reading and Writing), 83% strongly agreed with the idea and only 17% remained neutral. When asked about conducting a mock IHET exam and providing feedback before the actual exam, 86% agreed that a mock exam should be conducted, and feedback should be provided before the actual test while 14% neither agreed nor disagreed. The last statement in part 2 was that the ELC should make the past IHET test papers available to the eligible test-takers was responded with a higher percentage of strong agreement where 97% agreed on the idea while only 3% remained neutral.

As noted above in the research instrument, qualitative analysis of the writing answer scripts against the writing rubrics (Task response, Coherence and cohesion, Lexical Resources, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy) was done. In task response, 43 (89%) test-takers out of 48 failed to formulate and develop a position about a given statement, and their supporting ideas were not based on evidence and experience. Concerning coherence and cohesion, it was found that 42 test-takers neglected using cohesive devices to link ideas logically so that their essays lacked overall clarity. In terms of lexical resources, the researcher found 40 test-takers had problems with using a range of vocabulary relevant to the writing task while grammatical range and accuracy seemed to have posed a big problem to all candidates in that their essays were full of linguistic errors.

**Discussion of the Findings Related to the Survey**

As is clear from the findings of the survey questionnaire, the test takers found all three tests challenging in general. Without understanding the main idea and specific factual information in a monologue and a dialogue that students listen to in any listening test, the test takers cannot perform well to receive good scores for it. In addition, speaker’s accent and unknown vocabulary can greatly matter when it comes to understanding and sorting
out the required information and respond (In case of a listening test, candidates are asked to put a tick, underline or encircle the correct answer selecting from multiple options, writing one word/ a number) within the given period. Meanwhile, several students found accent and vocabulary difficult to comprehend. Regarding reading, most students found reading texts beyond their scope and a condition of this nature deprived the students of recognizing the writer's opinion, attitude, and purpose of the text. Furthermore, the readers must follow the development of an argument which an author makes in his/her writing to make meaning out of the text. As Goodman (1967) has observed that reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game, a process in which readers sample the text, make hypotheses, confirm or reject them, make new hypotheses, and so forth. The results of the questionnaire indicate that the test-takers lacked such reading abilities or strategies to cope with reading texts in the IHET.

Writing is another test which the test takers found challenging and cognitively demanding because the students had to write an argument essay in which they needed to either agree or disagree with the statement/issue given. Research tells us that writing is not an ability that can be developed once and then automatically deployed in new contexts. Rather, new kinds of writing demand new capabilities and understandings even as they build from previous learning (http://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/philosophy-aims/writing-dartmouth). According to Bell and Burnably (1984), writing requires the writer to demonstrate control of several variables simultaneously. In addition, writing, even in one’s mother tongue, is a demanding multi-stage task, which calls upon several language abilities, on more general, cognitive, linguistic, and meta-cognitive abilities are also crucially important in the writing development of second/foreign language learners. As suggested by the authors above, writing in an L2 requires constant practice and training with a writing instructor who is skilled in academic writing for a considerable time before they become proficient in different types of academic writing. Given the context in which the test takers performed in IHET, it was evident that they did not receive any practice condition of this kind unarguably led most of the test takers to receive low marks for writing tests. Moreover, the results indicate that the specialized committee that is responsible for preparing the IHET has not done any analysis of the test items that test-takers find difficult to score in each skill for the past few years. As a result, the specialized committee does not know how test-takers fare in the test. This is a pathetic condition on the part of students who want to pursue their higher studies in their chosen specializations in one respect and on the other, it is a gross violation of student rights in that they are deprived of access to higher education. This kind of activity will have negative consequences to the society in which they live and to the country in several ways. With this background information, we now discuss the possible reasons why a considerable number of students fail in the IHET below.

Possible Reasons for the Low Performance of the Test Takers

One of the possible reasons why the test takers fail to perform well in the IHET can mainly be ascribed to the fact that the construct of the IHET test and the curricula of the
Courses which the post-foundation students study at the colleges of technology do not perfectly match. Moreover, the IHET test is not designed to test a specific specialization (Engineering, IT, or Business Studies). Another reason is that the test takers lack proper training or adequate practice in listening, reading, and writing skills. Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014) report that Omani students complete their secondary school education with higher grades ranging from C+ to A. However, they enter higher education institutions with poor writing skills. While confirming what these researchers have stated in their study, we argue that most Omani students enter higher education institutions with low proficiency in all four skills. Once the students leave the general foundation program, they receive a chance to study English in the post-foundation program in which they are supposed to study Technical Writing 1 & 11, Technical Communication, and Public Speaking. However, while studying in the post-foundation, students do not receive any chance to study what they will be tested in the IHET. By the time they sit for the IHET, they will have forgotten all what they studied in the general foundation program in two years back. We believe that a condition of this type may have been different if the test takers had been trained for this specific exam. Another possible factor why test takers find the IHET difficult is that IHET poses irrelevant cognitive barriers for the test takers’ performance (Schroeder, 2016). The researchers have observed that most test-takers cannot understand the instruction in the test papers. Therefore, they cannot answer the questions properly. This mostly happens in writing. As shown in Figures 2, 5, and 6, a considerable number of test-takers have scored a 0 for all the three skills (listening, reading, and writing) and this is good proof that the test takers are incapable of understanding the questions properly before they attempt to answer them.

Suggestions and Recommendations
Based on the findings of the current research, the researchers wish to make the following suggestions and recommendations
1). Abolish the current In-House Entry Test and design, develop and pilot a suitable entry test that is fair for the post-foundation students in the colleges of technology.
2). Make a detailed analysis of the test results of all the seven colleges of technology for the span of at least 3 years and make the findings available to the public.
3). Start a systematic training program that will help post-foundation students to improve their language skills to a good level that is demanded in the entry test in every college.
4). Dissolve the current specialized committee based in Higher College of Technology and form a new specialized committee with qualified and competent lecturers representing all the seven colleges.

Conclusion
In conclusion, this paper reports the findings of a study that investigated why a clear majority of test-takers show low performance in three language skills (listening, reading,
and writing) offered in the IHET in both semesters. The study included the analysis of the IHET results for two semesters, a questionnaire, and a qualitative analysis of writing answer scripts and findings indicated that most test takers were not qualified enough to pursue their studies in an advanced diploma or bachelor’s degree programs. The findings, moreover, suggested that the current IHET test which is used by the colleges of technologies needs to be revised in line with the guidelines proposed in the ETS International Principles of the Fairness of Assessment issued by Educational Testing Service to make IHET a fair and valid test for test-takers. In addition, some of the possible reasons for the failure of the test takers were discussed and suggestions and recommendations for addressing the issue of the In-house entry test at the college level are offered.

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Pronunciation Problems Encountered by EFL Learners: An Empirical Study

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Received: 8/3/2021 Accepted: 11/8/2021 published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Arabs often mispronounce many sounds of English due to a lack of exposure to English as a foreign language. This research article focuses on pronunciation problems encountered by Arab undergraduate EFL learners. It uses questionnaires, recorded speech samples, and pronunciation tests as part of its methodology to analyze learners’ performance orally through repetition drills to help participants articulate the sounds of English through Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Learning Management System. This research emphasizes the main question on the common problems encountered by EFL undergraduates with pronunciation skills. The study aims to train the students with pronunciation tests and phonemic inventory by repetition and imitation to overcome pronunciation miscues and fossilized miscues to enhance their pronunciation. This study is significant because it proposes feasible pedagogical techniques for imparting English sounds and initiating the learners to produce and acquire sounds more accurately, which will help Arab undergraduate EFL learners with their pronunciation problems. To achieve this goal, it proposes feasible pedagogical techniques to impart sounds of English and initiate the learners to produce and acquire sounds more accurately. One of the main findings of this research revealed that our EFL undergraduates have improved in their pronunciation through constant motivation and willingness to participate in the designed tests through Blackboard. Recommendations for further research would be on phonological awareness as an aid in learning EFL.

Keywords: Fossilization, EFL learners, miscues, phonemic inventory, pronunciation problems, sounds

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.14
Introduction

English is widely accepted as a medium of communication and occupies a definite place in the curriculum of EFL schools, colleges, and universities. Learning English as a foreign language is needed for female Arab learners to engage themselves in life skills. Though many Arabs struggle with foreign language acquisition, one of the most significant challenges is pronunciation. Many EFL students may find that pronouncing words is a barrier to effective communication. More importantly, pronunciation is a critical component of oral communication (Berry, 2021). Thus, without correct pronunciation, verbal communication can be done inadequately and can be rigorously impaired.

During the past few years and recently, there has been significant growth of interest and attention given to pronunciation teaching. Many research studies on pronunciation in the EFL context have been conducted (Abdul-Abbas et al., 2021). However, while these studies on pronunciation are performed, this area still needs to be investigated, and more research in EFL classrooms in the Arab world is required. “Pronunciation teaching has not always been popular with teachers and language teaching theorists” (Roach, 2009, p. 5).

There is renewed interest in phonological perception and production from linguistic, cognitive, and social perspectives, and there is a renewed emphasis on second language pronunciation. (Troike, 2006).

According to Reed and Levis (2019), language is regularly expressed and conceived in various systems. According to Berry (2021), the sound system is a system of speech units that learners need to pronounce clearly and correctly. These units of speech can generally be named vocabulary. The learners should make use of the vocabulary appropriately when they speak. The meaning system is called grammar, which is how the learners use the words to express meaning. Arab EFL learners must master and understand both approaches because they work together interchangeably. If EFL learners need to communicate successfully, then they need to master these systems together. The majority of language programs in the EFL context consider teaching these aspects of language systematically and should not neglect them.

The best way to comprehend people is to listen to them carefully to improve one’s pronunciation. Many EFL learners experience inhibition and anxiety when they communicate. Because of inhibition, they lack the confidence to pronounce words appropriately (Nakazawa, 2012). Language learning and teaching environments must be learner-friendly and free from stress and anxiety so the learners can feel less stressed and consequently engage in conversations during classroom interaction (Krashen, 1982). One more reason for the importance of pronunciation is that the English language has become the primary language for oral communication globally (Crystal, 2003).

Study Rationale

The current research study aims to obtain an opinion of thirty-two female EFL undergraduate participants from the level five Bachelor of Arts program from Qassim University, Saudi Arabia, and their perception of pronunciation teaching and training. Therefore, as we mentioned earlier, this study aims to recognize the pronunciation problems of female undergraduate learners, identify the support needs, and implement strategy training for these
learners using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra LMS. It attempts to examine participants by introducing a variety of tests to enhance their listening and pronunciation skills.

To sum up, teaching pronunciation in an English language program for undergraduates is crucial and unavoidable. “There are many well-tried methods of teaching and testing pronunciation” (Roach, 2009, p. 6). According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), a more realistic goal that teachers and researchers are increasingly advocating is logical pronunciation speaking in a way that most listeners. Both native and non-native speakers can understand without too much effort or confusion. Understating pronunciation’s importance will help design effective instructional and academic ways to teach pronunciation.

The following questions were addressed by the researchers, with an emphasis on pronunciation proficiency.

**RQ1.** What are the common problems encountered by EFL undergraduates with pronunciation skills?

**RQ2.** What is the perception of each EFL student towards pronunciation skills?

**RQ3.** What are pronunciation strategies, and how do undergraduate learners apply them in their learning process?

**Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this current research is to help Arab undergraduate EFL learners with their pronunciation issues by proposing feasible pedagogical techniques for imparting English sounds and initiating the learners to produce and acquire sounds more accurately. Another objective of this recent research study is to see how far Arab undergraduate EFL learners can improve their pronunciation of English words and phrases through repetition and imitation of pronunciation tests and phonemic inventory to overcome pronunciation miscues and fossilized miscues. An additional objective could be to raise the perception of each Arab undergraduate EFL learner towards pronunciation skills.

**Literature Review**

English holds an unusual position as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. According to Alharbi (2019), the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education decree has initiated EFL teaching in the primary schools of the kingdom since 1942.

Saudi Arabia’s education system was established in 1926 with the teaching of schoolboys. During the reign of King Saud bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, the Ministry of Education was established in 1952. According to the new education policy, the Ministry of Education has incorporated English as a foreign language (EFL) into the Saudi Arabian education system as one of the mandatory options beginning in primary school and continuing through university. Ministry of Education (2021) as cited in Jahara & Abdelrady (2021). As a result of its global recognition, EFL has become a requirement for learners in the educational context. At around twelve years old, most of our study’s participants were introduced to EFL in sixth grade, the final year of primary school. They had three years of EFL exposure in intermediate school and three years in higher secondary school. The total number of years spent learning EFL is seven. Despite years of learning and exposure to EFL, most learners cannot engage in day-to-day conversations in English, have the poor reading ability, and have pronunciation issues. These problems were
also investigated by Alshehri,(2020). He stated that “Pronunciation is vital for the EFL learners in terms of intelligibility of pronunciation and understanding of oral material.” (p. 208). They lack confidence in communicating with their teachers and peer group.

During the last decade, researchers investigated pronunciation problems made by EFL Arab learners in terms of learning difficulties in English phonology. Al-Rubaat & Alshammari (2020) discovered that EFL learners had difficulty correctly pronouncing the first three consonant clusters and the final three in English. He concluded that learners were mistakenly pronouncing these clusters as employed reduction, substitution, or deletion as alternate methods.

Another related study by Al-Rubaat and Alshammari (2020) asserts that Saudi EFL students face similar difficulties developing speaking and pronunciation skills. The objective of the EFL curriculum introduced at the undergraduate level with specific reference to teaching listening and speaking instruction aim at raising awareness among the learners about the importance of pronunciation instruction. The emphasis was stressed on listening to sound systems to enhance pronunciation and communication skills in English. This issue is also emphasized by Vadakalur Elumalai et al. (2021), who affirmed that English language pronunciation is a sub-skill of speaking modules during a second language learning process. To improve the language skills of the EFL learners, exposure to pronunciation is necessary (Abker, 2020), as it would help learners distinguish good English from poor English. “Good” speech may define as a way of speaking which is intelligible to all ordinary people. “Bad” speech is a way of talking that is difficult for most people to understand. (Jones, 1956 as cited in Roach, 2009).

Furthermore, the issue of pronunciation was looked into by (Khaleghi et al., 2020). He asserted that adult EFL learners in Saudi Arabia would get good training in mastering English phonetics. The learners would then learn to pronounce the phonemes more accurately in English.

A similar study was conducted at Jouf University (J.U.) in the north of Saudi Arabia to investigate the pronunciation difficulties encountered by Saudi EFL learners. The researchers of that study achieved their goal by implementing two main instruments: a pronunciation sensitivity response experiment and two interview formats. (Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2020). They found that: initial consonant cluster, ending consonant cluster, multi-syllabic words, novel sounds, vowels, and voiced or voiceless phonemes were among the six phonetic and phonological problematic patterns experienced by EFL students (Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2020).

To sum up, this study is ultimately different from all the above studies because it was more practical and realistic. The researchers set out the strategy and then applied it through training the EFL learners through Blackboard LMS. The study’s findings will be hoping to help in teaching pronunciation and consequently resolve adult female Arab EFL learners’ pronunciation problems.

Methods

Participants

Thirty-two B.A undergraduate students took part in our research study from third-year level five. Before participating in the present study, they completed a self-reporting questionnaire to gather information about their English learning experiences and pronunciation
behaviors. The primary reason for concentrating on undergraduate learners was based on the researcher’s experience teaching to B. A. undergraduates at Qassim University. The proposed study was intended to be an online research study using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra LMS that seeks an understanding of the importance of pronunciation instruction in the EFL classroom designed for undergraduate learners. This study used qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the participant’s pronunciation ability. The researchers did the periodic assessment to evaluate the learners’ pronunciation skills through recordings from Blackboard LMS.

**The Qassim University Curriculum Program**

The Qassim University’s curriculum for B.A. program is designed with 127 total credit hours to complete undergraduate studies in the English Language and Translation Department. The students achieve learning through their study time, in-class participation, assignments, projects, presentations, and library work with three credit hours for each course and 15 to 18 hours of learning each week per semester. The university’s curriculum focuses on developing skills that encourage listening, speaking, reading, writing, and pronunciation through individual, pair, and group activities, as well as making participants able to talk about their ideas, daily lives, and surroundings through a variety of exercises and tests. The pronunciation syllabus in the third-year first semester for level five participants was designed to enable them to understand English’s segmental and suprasegmental features as per the requirement of undergraduates by the university. The listening and pronunciation practice units were taken from the prescribed curriculum, and the installed C. D’s were provided by the course books.

**Procedure**

The researchers work as faculty in English in the College of Sciences and Arts at Qassim University in Al-Asyah. This research was carried out using Qassim University Virtual Classroom Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Learning Management System for one semester for level five undergraduates. The course was taught with three credit hours twice a week for fourteen weeks throughout the semester. All the thirty-two undergraduates of B. A. third-year from level five actively participated in the online lectures throughout the semester on Blackboard LMS.

**Design of the Research Study and Tools**

The study adopted qualitative and quantitative research methods and was divided into two stages: Preliminary investigation stage I and Primary investigation stage II.

**Preliminary Investigation Stage I**

In the first stage, a preliminary study will be undertaken to focus on the different factors to be studied and examined concerning the problems of teaching and learning pronunciation skills online. The emphasis is also to get an idea of the participant’s pronunciation ability, their challenges on pronunciation, and their perception of pronunciation skills. This baseline data was hoped to help the second stage of research. Preliminary investigation is very significant for the present study because this stage is expected to provide basic information like the background information, pronunciation proficiency, participants’ ability to focus on individual letters and sounds, and their competence in employing suitable strategies. A sixteen-statement questionnaire on pronunciation challenges was administered to investigate the preliminary investigation stage.
Primary Investigation Stage II

In the primary investigation, pronunciation instruction followed various online pronunciation tests using Blackboard Collaborative Ultra LMS for one semester. This study was put in operation for three months by the researchers. Initially, it was intended to observe EFL learners from vernacular medium whose pronunciation and language competence in English was inadequate through the sixteen responses from the questionnaire. These fundamental observations will help the researchers organize interactive online sessions and tests through Blackboard LMS for learners to understand their pronunciation ability. For this purpose, the researchers have administered the following research tools to explore further insights into the study: initial pronunciation test, phonemic word square, phonemic inventory of consonant and vowel phonemes, and final pronunciation test. After each pronunciation test, the participants were encouraged to clarify their doubts regarding their pronunciation ability on the conducted test.

The following stages could be identified as part of our primary study.

a. The pronunciation ability of participants was assessed using Blackboard recordings.
b. Participants’ pronunciation issues were identified during online participation, and they were analyzed.
c. Analyzing the strategies adopted by the participants in pronunciation tasks.
d. Compiling the list of each participant’s pronunciation skills.

Initial pronunciation test: To motivate the participants to develop the perception of sounds, particularly the pronunciation, accent, and intonation, they were encouraged to recite the sounds with examples with their teacher. The researchers introduced sounds of English and gave articulatory descriptions with the help of a microphone. We used a fundamental level pronunciation proficiency test from Unit two of the prescribed curriculum for B.A. third-year was selected to begin our preliminary research. The researchers asked the participants to pronounce a list of four short vowel sounds, for example “/æ/, /ʌ/, /ɪ/, /e/” and eight sample pronunciation words for instance: “bread, rough, foot, hymn, pull, cough, mat and friend” (Roach, 2009, p. 15). This test was administered to analyze the participant’s pronunciation of different sounds and words of the English language at an initial stage of the research study. All the thirty-two participants took the initial pronunciation test, and their voice was recorded through Blackboard LMS, and the results were analyzed.

Phonemic word square: A phonemic word square pronunciation test was given to enrich English pronunciation, with missing phonemes identified and added to phonemic word squares to create meaningful full words as cited by (Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021). The researchers gave the participants ten examples of “English vowels” and asked them to guess the words related to short vowels, long vowels, and diphthongs, such as “/iː/ beach, /aɪ/ rhyme, /ɔː/ talk, /ʊ/ shop, /e/ sell, /æ/ cap, /ʌ/ cut, /ʊ/ bush, /eɪ/ pain and /əʊ/ tone” (Hancock, 2012, p. 136). The researchers requested the participants to fill in the missing phonemes in the phonemic word squares and create four meaningful words, and their responses were recorded on Blackboard LMS.

Phonemic inventory vowel and consonants: The participants of our study were familiar with the sounds of English. They were given ear training on the perception of sound and identification of sounds with examples. The learners were exposed to forty-four phonemes
focusing on twelve monophthongs, eight diphthongs, and twenty-four consonant phonemes (Roach, 2009). After giving sufficient ear training in sounds with the help of “English Phonetics and Phonology Audio C.D” to our participants, the researchers recorded the speech samples of phonemes through Blackboard LMS care was taken to minimize the internal disturbances during the recording of online sessions. All the participants of our study participated in learning the sounds of English. The researchers analyzed the participant’s pronunciation by pronouncing the list of vowel and consonant phonemes using their microphone. All the study participants took the phonemic inventory test, and the results were scored listening to participants’ pronunciation and their voice recordings.

Final pronunciation test: The researchers have chosen pronunciation to varied sounds by choosing simple day-to-day conversations for the final pronunciation proficiency test. This test covered six conversations of everyday life based on English vowel and consonant phonemes. The conversations were selected from the curriculum (Hancock, 2012). The test was conducted to direct and analyze the participant’s attention to different sounds of English, their pronunciation difficulties, their ability to focus on individual letters and sounds, focus on sounds in combination, and make distinctions of sounds in conversations. All the participants of our study completed the final pronunciation test by listening to the conversations and writing their responses. The researchers analyzed the participant’s responses, and the results were scored.

Results

Preliminary Investigation Stage I

Preliminary investigation stage I presents the discussion, analysis, and interpretation of the data collected through a questionnaire from thirty-two female undergraduate EFL participants from level five from Qassim University. After the researchers had distributed the questionnaire to the participants, they constructed the required tables for collected data. This step consisted of transformation of the qualitative (nominal) variables (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) to quantitative variables (1,2,3,4,5) respectively. The collected data has been well computerized and analyzed by SPSS. The researchers analyzed the statements in the questionnaire in terms of frequencies and percentages.

To know the trend of the participant’s opinions about each statement in the questionnaire, the researchers computed the median, which is one of the central tendency measures that used to describe the phenomena, and it represents the centered answer for all respondents’ answers after ascending or descending order for the answers.

Table one presents the participant’s responses based on sixteen questions from the questionnaire. It was observed that a majority of participants gave fair and positive reactions to the statements asked. The responses were in variables of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, and these statements were calculated by median value after getting the responses from the participant’s questionnaire.

Findings of the Questionnaire

Statement one: It is clear from Table one (see Appendix A) that sixteen participants in the study’s sample have strongly agreed with (50%) on the statement as a learner, I did not learn how to differentiate between /p/ and /b/ sounds properly during school. Five participants (15.6%)

ISSN: 2229-9327
agreed, and only one participant (3.1%) had undecided the statement. It was observed that in the Arabic language, only /b/ sound is found, and /p/ sound is not available, and this could be a significant barrier for the Arab learners to discriminate /p/ and /b/ phonemes. Statement two: As a learner, I usually get confused and mix between /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ sounds. This statement from Table one (see Appendix A) was intended to elicit the participants’ opinion on pronunciation words like the chauffer, chic, sharpen, and chair. Statement three: I usually get confused, and mix /ɪ/ and /e/ sounds as a learner. This statement from Table one (see Appendix A) was intended to know students’ perception of the short vowel /e/ sound and the pronunciation of words like bread and resume. Statement four: As a learner, I usually get confused with /ʃ/ short vowel and /iː/ long vowel sounds. This statement from Table one (see Appendix A) was intended to know students’ perception of the pronunciation of short vowel /iː/ and long vowel /iː:/ sounds. It was observed that many students mix these sounds while reading or pronunciation of words like hymn, mean, and peace. Statement five: I do not know how to differentiate between /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ sounds as a learner. The above statement from Table one (see Appendix A) was intended to elicit the participants’ opinion on the /tʃ/ sound. It was observed that many students get confused with words like chin and chime. Statement six: As a learner, I do not know how to differentiate between /æ/ and /ɑː/ sounds. The above statement shows from Table one (see Appendix A) explains that most of the students do not know to distinguish between /æ/ and /ɑː/ sounds. It is observed that /æ/ sound does not exist in the Arabic language, which confuses the participants, and /ɑː/ sound confuses the participants with spelling miscues. Statement seven: I find it difficult to pronounce the following minimal pairs meet and meat as a learner. The above statement from Table one (see Appendix A) clearly illustrates that the majority of the students face challenges in pronouncing the minimal pairs accurately. Statement eight: As a learner, I always get confused, and mix between /s/ and /θ/ sounds as in thousand and south. This statement from Table one (see Appendix A) intends to show that most of the students mix between /s/ and /θ/ sounds. Statement nine: As a learner, I face pronunciation difficulties in general usage of words due to the differences between Arabic and English. This statement from Table one (see Appendix A) illustrates that there is much difference between Arabic and English grammar and sound systems, making many students commit miscues about transfer, interference, and overgeneralization. Statement ten: As a learner, I get confused when I pronounce the following words leave and great. The statistics in this statement from Table one (see Appendix A) shows that students get confused when they pronounce pure vowels and diphthongs. Therefore, pronunciation sufficiently permits effective communication. Statement 11: I get confused when I pronounce /r/ as in doctor and teacher as a learner. This statement from Table one (see Appendix A) displays that students face difficulty pronouncing /r/ at the end or adding this sound to the word, which leads to mispronunciation. Statement 12: As a learner, I do not differentiate between weak and strong forms as in that, could and have. The above statement from Table one (see Appendix A) indicates that many students do not know weak and strong forms. One of the noticeable features in English pronunciation is its syllables, and students of EFL need to know its distribution and pronunciation. Statement 13: As a learner, I usually mix between the /dʒ/ and /g/ sounds. The above statement from Table one (see Appendix A) indicates that many Arab speakers substitute /dʒ/ sound with /g/ sound. It stimulated the participants’ opinion on pronouncing the /dʒ/ and /g/ sounds. Statement 14: As a learner, I get confused with the pronunciation of /ʒ/ sound as in treasure, measure, and pleasure. This statement from Table one (see Appendix A) illustrates that the majority of the students get confused with the pronunciation of /ʒ/ sound because this sound does not exist in the Arabic language.
15: As a learner, I get confused and mix with the pronunciation of /s/ and /ʃ/ sounds. The above statement from Table one (see Appendix A) demonstrates that most students fail to distinguish between /s/ and /ʃ/ sounds and commit pronunciation miscues. Statement 16: As a learner, I usually get confused when I pronounce /r/ sound as in car and cart. This statement from Table one (see Appendix A) clearly illustrates that the majority of the students get confused when they pronounce /r/ sound in the middle or end of a word such as car, cart, or particular, which leads to pronunciation miscues. EFL learners who wish to get close to native-like competency should be careful not to pronounce /r/ that is often found to correspond to the spelling.

**Primary Investigation Stage II**

**Findings of Initial Pronunciation Test**

As the present research focused on improving the pronunciation skills of the participants, an integrated initial pronunciation test was conducted to test the participants’ knowledge to identify four vowel sounds and eight sample words through Blackboard Collaborate Ultra LMS. It was observed that a majority of the participants were incompetent speakers of EFL, and they gave importance to spelling rather than sound and the accent was a significant barrier for the participants to understand the correct pronunciation for the given sample words. Therefore, it was decided and confirmed that the participants needed training from scratch to gain proficiency in English pronunciation skills.

Table 2. Summary of participants responses in initial pronunciation test Primary Investigation Stage II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ responses</th>
<th>Sounds scored</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale C = correct responses, IC = incorrect responses, D = divergences

Table two presents the participant’s performance based on their correct and incorrect responses in identifying the four short vowel sounds and eight sample words. We used a measuring scale of C-for correct responses, IC-for incorrect responses, and D-divergences. It was observed that a majority of participants gave positive responses in the pronunciation of short vowel sounds. Practicing sounds helped the participants perceive sounds, particularly by repetition and rehearsing sounds with suitable examples. The scores of the initial pronunciation test are 97 correct responses, 23 incorrect responses, and eight were divergences in pronunciation of sounds.

Table 3. Summary of participants responses in initial pronunciation test primary investigation stage II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ responses</th>
<th>Words scored</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>018</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale C = correct responses, IC = incorrect responses, D = divergences
Table three illustrates the participant’s performance based on their correct and incorrect responses in pronunciation of eight sample words. We used a measuring scale of C-for correct responses, IC-for incorrect responses, and D-divergences. It was perceived that most participants were low achievers in pronouncing sample words compared to sounds in the initial pronunciation test. The initial sample words test scores were 134 correct responses, 104 incorrect responses, and 18 were divergences. Vocabulary is the main element of language proficiency. Learning words is a lifelong process, and EFL students should constantly update their vocabulary to achieve spelling and pronunciation proficiency. It has to be taught so that participants may be trained to pronounce and write naturally and effectively. There is no fixed method to enhance vocabulary in a day or two. Its acquisition demands meticulous and step-by-step learning. It can be enriched gradually, and one should always evince enthusiasm in finding, education, and understanding new words.

Findings of the Phonemic Word Squares

Phonemic word squares helped to develop pronunciation by attention focusing, anticipating sounds, and inferencing the phonemes in word squares, as cited by (Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021). After sufficient training through Blackboard LMS, most participants were able to understand native and near-native English speech. They improved in identifying English sounds to fill the phonemic word squares, for example, /i:/ beach, bean, cheese and knees, /æ/ bat, tap, cap and sat /e/ sell, tell, set, yet, /ɔ:/ tall, talk, call, laws and so on. This game can be adapted to teach any vocabulary item, and it is a great way to teach English pronunciation more clearly and distinctively, as cited by (Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021). After the initial pronunciation test, the other tests administered to the participants are exposed to open-ended tasks to enrich their listening and pronunciation skills and experience predicting abilities to perform better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ responses</th>
<th>Words scored</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale C = correct responses, IC = incorrect responses, D = divergences

Table four explains the participant’s performance based on their correct and incorrect responses in pronunciation of ten phonemic squares. We used a measuring scale of C-for correct responses, IC-for incorrect responses, and D-divergences. It was detected that the majority of participants showed positive responses and completed the phonemic word squares. The phonemic word squares test scores are 204 correct responses, 96 incorrect responses, and 20 were divergences.

Findings of the Phonemic Inventory Consonants

The participants were given training through Blackboard LMS in consonant phonemes. After sufficient ear training, their voice was recorded to identify their pronunciation and articulation of consonants. The phonemic inventory consonants were introduced to make participants know how to transcribe words and pronounce transcribed words, to be able to understand and explain the difference between consonant and vowel phonemes, and to be able to
produce intelligible English utterances. In the pronunciation of consonant phonemes, the majority of the participants gave positive responses, with 654 accurate answers.

It was observed that a few participants have confusion in distinguishing between the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ with voiced bilabial plosive /b/sound. It was observed that only /b/ sound is found in the Arabic language, and /p/ sound is not available, which could be a significant barrier for the Arab learners to discriminate between the voiced and voiceless bilabial /p/ and /b/ phonemes. Fricatives posed a problem for some of the participants. The recorded speech samples indicate that in a majority of the speakers, the voiced dental fricative /ð/ and voiceless dental fricative /θ/ sounds were observed to be problematic as the participants were confused with the articulation of /0,ð/ and these sounds were substituted by /t,d/sound in p5, p6, p12, p18, p25, and p28. Similarly, the voiced palato alveolar fricative /ʒ/ was substituted by /dʒ/ sound in p3, p6, p11, p13, p14, p16, p18 and the voiceless palato alveolar fricative /ʃ/ was substituted by /s/, and /dʒ/ sounds in p1, p3, p4, p6, p8, p11, p14, p15, p16, and p18. It was noticed that a few participants found the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ confusing, and this sound was substituted by /w/ sound in p12, p16, and p22. For a few speaker’s affricates posed a problem. The voiced palato alveolar affricate /dʒ/ was substituted by ‘jaa’ in p3, p6, p11, p13, p14, p16, p18 and the voiceless palato alveolar affricate /tʃ/ was substituted by ‘cha’ sound in p3, p10, p11, p12, p15, and p16.

It is observed that a majority of participants were confused to distinguish between voiceless palato alveolar fricative /ʃ/ p1, p3, p4, p6, p8, p11, p14, 15, p16, p23, p25 with voiceless palato alveolar affricate /tʃ/ p3, p10, p11, p12, p15, and p16 sound. Some participants were confused with voiced velar plosive /g/and substituted with voiced palato alveolar affricate /dʒ/. Some participants were confused with voiced approximant /j/ p5, p7, p8, p9, p10, p14, p17, p19, p29, and this sound was absent in the phonemic inventory of a few participants p1, p3, p4, p6, p8, p11, p14, and a few participants substituted this sound by voiced palato alveolar affricate /dʒ/ sound. Two letters in English can have one sound, but many Arab learners do not know how to pronounce and differentiate sounds such as ch, sh, ph, gh, and so on.

Similarly, some participants were confused with lateral alveolar voiced approximant /l/ p7, p8, p16, p19, p21, p23, p28, p31 and substituted it by ‘laa.’ The researchers observed that nasals also were problematic to some participants, and some of the participants p4, p6, p16, p22, p23, p24 were confused to pronounce voiced alveolar nasal /n/ and for some of the participants p6, p15, p22, p23, p25 the voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ were absent. However, it is observed that the majority of the speakers showed positive responses in the phonemic consonant inventory.

When looking at the phonemic inventory’s total divergences, it was observed that a few participants, p16 and p 24, committed miscues in the pronunciation of voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ as ‘paa.’ Two participants, p19 and p 26, committed miscues in the pronunciation of voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ as ‘taa.’ Participants p16 and p28 committed miscues in the pronunciation of voiced bilabial plosive /b/ as ‘baa.’ As referred to in the majority of our findings of the learners faced problems with fricatives. The voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ was substituted by ‘faa’ in p3, p23, and p 25 participants, and the voiced labio-dental fricative was substituted as ‘vaa’ in p23, p25, and p29 participants. In the majority of the speakers, the voiced dental fricative /ð/ and voiceless dental fricative /θ/ sound was observed to be problematic as the speakers were
confused with the articulation of \(/\theta, \delta/\) and these sounds were substituted by \(/t, d/\) sounds in p18, p19, and p26 participants. Similarly, the voiced palato alveolar fricative \(/\z/\) was substituted by \(/dz/, /\z/\) sounds in p3, p6, p11, p13, p14, p16, and p18 and the voiceless palato alveolar fricative \(/\r/\) was substituted by \(/s/\) sound in p1, p3, p4, p6, p11, p13, p14, p16, p18, p23, p25 participants. It is noticed that a few speakers found the voiced labiodental fricative \(/v/\) confusing, and this sound was substituted by \(/w/\) sound in participants p12, p16, and p22.

Table 5. Summary of participants responses on phonemic inventory consonants primary investigation stage II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ responses</th>
<th>Sounds scored</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale C = correct responses, IC = incorrect responses, D = divergences

Table five demonstrates the participant’s performance based on consonant phonemes, and we used a measuring scale of C-for correct responses, IC-for incorrect responses, and D-divergences. It was perceived that the majority of participants gave positive responses in the pronunciation of consonant sounds with 654 correct responses, 111 incorrect responses, and 36 divergences.

**Findings of the Phonemic Inventory Vowels**

The participants were given training through Blackboard LMS in vowel phonemes. After sufficient ear training, their voice was recorded to identify their pronunciation and articulation of vowels. The phonemic inventory vowels were introduced to teach participants how to transcribe and pronounce words, understand, compare and contrast different theories of rhythm, assess the phonetic and phonological merits and demerits of English speech, and produce intelligible English utterances. A majority of positive responses have been observed from all the participants in vowel phonemes with 486 correct responses.

However, vowels posed problematic to some of the participants, and they were confused to distinguish between the close front vowel \(/i/\) p14, p22, p27 with close-mid front vowel \(/e/\) p11, p19, p26. Some participants p10, p22 was confused to distinguish between the short vowel \(/i/\) with long vowel \(/i:/\). It was observed that some participants do not know how to distinguish between the short vowel \(/æ/\) p1, p3, p11, p19, p23, p25, p28, p29, p30 with long vowel \(/a:/\) sound p3, p5, p6, p19, p27 failed to produce the acceptable sound patterns. A majority of participants p1, p3, p5, p6, p7, p11, p12, p13, p14, p15, p19, p23, p25, p27, p31 failed to distinguish the short vowel \(/\alpha/, /\alpha/\) and \(/\alpha/\) and these sounds were absent in some participants p3, p5, p6, p7, p12, p13, p15, p19, p23. It is observed that some of participants p3, p5, p6, p19, p27 were confused to distinguish the long vowel sound \(/\alpha:/\) with diphthong \(/e\alpha/\) and participants p4, p6, p8, p13, p14, p16, p17, p19, p22, p23, p24, p27, p29 failed to produce the good sound patterns. Short and long vowel sounds are not easy to master by Arab learners without constant practice. Arabic orthography is different from English orthography, which raises challenges for Arab learners to recognize and understand the sound pattern and alphabet. It is observed that many silent letters in the English language also confuse Arab learners because the Arabic language does not have many silent letters compared to the English language.
By and large, most of the participants seemed to have monophthongs in their inventory. Concerning centering and closing diphthongs, the sounds, /əʊ, aʊ, eə, ai, øi/ were missing from the inventory of a few participants p3, p5, p9, p14, p15, p18, p19, p24, p26, p28, p29, and some participants had divergences with the production of diphthongs. Centering diphtong /eə/ was substituted as ‘yeh,’ ‘year’ and /ai/’oye’ ‘aaea’ was substituted by participants p4, p5, p7, p13, p15, p17, p19 and /au/ was replaced by ‘oye’ ‘aaea’ by participants p3, p5, p7, p9, p14, p15, p17, p19. Finally, all the participants of the research study took the phonemic inventory vowels and showed positive responses.

Table 6. Summary of participants responses on phonemic inventory vowels primary investigation stage II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ responses</th>
<th>Sounds scored</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale C = correct responses, IC = incorrect responses, D = divergences

Table six elucidates the participant’s performance on vowel phonemes, and we used a measuring scale of C-for correct responses, IC-for incorrect responses, and D-divergences. It was witnessed that the majority of participants gave positive responses in the pronunciation of vowel sounds with 486 correct responses, 152 incorrect responses, and 18 divergences.

Findings of Final Pronunciation Test

The final pronunciation test covered six conversations of day-to-day life based on English vowel and consonant phonemes. The participants showed tremendous progress and improvement from their initial pronunciation test to the final pronunciation test. The participants were informed to read the conversation, pronounce the appropriate sound, and fill in the blanks. The final test was given to participants to assess their attention to speech sounds that differ in significant components of the phonological system, possible sequences of consonant and vowel phonemes, and to recognize which speech sounds can and cannot occur in combination. The participants need to understand the right sound to fill in the blanks and pronounce it accurately to improve their pronunciation and listening skills. “Proficiency in phonological perception and intelligible production is essential for successful spoken communication” (Troike, 2006, p. 143).

The first conversation was on bilabial plosive /p/ and /b/ (Hancock, 2012). It was experiential that most participants were familiar with /p/ and /b/ sounds. They actively participated in the conversation test and showed positive responses in identifying the appropriate sounds. The second conversation was on alveolar fricative sounds /s/ and /z/ (Hancock, 2012). It was observed that though most of the participants were familiar with /s/ and /z/ sounds, very few participants were confused with /s/ sound and replaced it with /z/ sound in the given conversation. The third conversation was on velar plosive sounds /g/ and /k/ (Hancock, 2012). It was experimental that most of the participants were familiar with /g/ and /k/ sounds and actively participated in the conversation test. They showed positive responses in identifying the appropriate sounds. The fourth conversation was on palato alveolar fricative /ʃ/ and palato alveolar affricates /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ sounds (Hancock, 2012). It was practical that the majority of the participants were familiar with the affricates /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ and a few of them mistook palato alveolar fricative /ʃ/ and substituted it with /tʃ/. The fifth conversation was on vowel sounds /ɑː/
and /eə/ (Hancock, 2012). It is observed that a majority of participants were confused with the vowel sounds /ɑː/ and /eə/ and failed to produce syntactically acceptable patterns. Furthermore, the final conversation was on vowel sounds /ɑː/ and /iː/ (Hancock, 2012). The majority of the participants showed positive responses in identifying the appropriate sounds and the scores of the participants showed remarkable progress in their performance.

Table 7. Summary of participants responses on final pronunciation test primary investigation stage II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Number of participants grade</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>+90</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>+80</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>+70</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>+60</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale A = excellent, B = good, C = average D = needs improvement

Table seven proves the participant’s performance on the final pronunciation test. We used a measuring scale of A-for +90 excellent, B-for +80 good, C- for +70 average, and D- for +60 needs improvement. It was observed that the majority of 18 participants achieved an excellent grade performance in the final pronunciation test; nine participants scored B grade good performance, one participant scored C grade average performance, and four participants scored D grade who needed improvement in their pronunciation skills.

Discussion

Pronunciation, listening, and speaking skills prosper with active interaction between teachers and students. One of the essential aspects of foreign language teaching and learning is English pronunciation because it affects students’ communication skills and performance.

Lack of pronunciation skills reduces learners’ self-confidence and limits their social interactions. EFL teachers can help their learners obtain the necessary skills of pronunciation they need for effective communication (Gilakjani & Sabouri, as cited in Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021).

Listening to different sounds and words involves recognizing the sounds of words, perception of sound, accent, and tonal variation to recognize the speech sounds of the words. Articulation disorders include problems with the articulation process and their sound patterns; heard sounds can be substituted, have divergences, left off without articulating, linguistic innovation, or change the sound. Some participants were confused with the perception of sounds due to mother tongue influence, articulation disorders, and lack of exposure to attentive listening and pronunciation skills in the initial pronunciation test. It was noticed that some of the participants committed miscues due to their incompetent pronunciation skills. It was discovered that though listening and pronunciation skills are a part of the curriculum, it is hardly taught systematically.

The learners’ questionnaire responses and other tests revealed that Table One (see Appendix A) while listening and pronunciation were taught as part of the curriculum beginning at level one, they were not trained in accordance with their needs. This research study aims to improve the listening and pronunciation skills of B. A program undergraduates in order to
improve their reading and speaking skills. Various listening and pronunciation tests were developed to help participants improve their listening and pronunciation skills to help the unsuccessful speakers pronounce better.

The researchers first checked each received pronunciation (R.P) sound in the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra LMS when introducing phonemic inventory vowels, and consonants refer to Tables five and six. The participants were instructed to use a microphone to record their voices by uttering the consonant and vowel phonemes. If the sound was missing or not correctly articulated, the phoneme sound is marked as missing in the speaker’s inventory and treated as a miscue or error. Suppose the sound articulated correctly in the text but not in a place where it should occur but occurred elsewhere were treated as divergences. The recorded sound of each participant is analyzed and evaluated based on a measuring scale presented as C-for correctly pronounced response IC-for incorrectly pronounced response and D-for divergences. All the participants of our research study participated in phonemic inventory consonants and vowels, and their responses were recorded and analyzed. The participants were initially hesitant to participate and articulate the phonemes when their voice was recorded using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra LMS refer Table one initial pronunciation test.

The researchers gave participants regular practice sessions. They were repeatedly asked to pronounce sounds with the help of sample words refer to Table two and comparative words to overcome fossilized pronunciation errors. It was explained to the participants that practicing English sounds would help them improve their pronunciation and communication skills. It was discovered that developing listening skills with attentiveness can improve participants’ pronunciation. According to Chang (2005), pronunciation practice is a methodology meant for EFL teachers who have little background in phonetics or phonology and those who feel a need for expansion in their lesson repertoire. It is noted that many instructors are reluctant to teach pronunciation in adult EFL classrooms, often because of a lack of formal training. However, significant numbers of EFL students want pronunciation instruction. Although stand-alone pronunciation courses are for second-language (L2) learners, many students cannot access them. Pronunciation activities in general-skills L2 textbooks are one approach to meeting the needs of both instructors and students. (Derwing et al., 2012, as cited in Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021).

According to Troike (2006), L2 learners must be proficient in phonological perception in most educational settings, and intelligible pronunciation is required for listening and speaking. Arab learners frequently experience articulation and phonological difficulties due to inadequate phonics and phonetics instruction, which leads to mispronunciation issues. All our participants received education in the English language from their sixth grade of primary schooling. The participants did not receive proper guidance in English pronunciation at school, and the language gained outside the classroom was minimal. Incompetent EFL teachers are also one of a reason. Therefore, the English language teachers must be trained at various levels through appropriate curricula in listening and pronunciation skills to become reasonably familiar with different styles of pronunciation and accent. Trained teachers will help students identify the text of any speech and understand the content from the correct perspective. The curriculum should include teaching phonics and phonetics at early stages or levels of learning.
It was experiential that most participants improved their pronunciation skills from preliminary investigation stage I to primary investigation stage II. There has been tremendous progress in the pronunciation skills of participants from the initial pronunciation test to the final pronunciation test. Most of our participants had a joyous urge to enrich their pronunciation skills. They were highly motivated towards learning the sounds of English to develop their pronunciation and listening ability. Finally, the enthusiasm and motivation to learn trains the participants in intensity and persistence in pronunciation activities related to the content and context of our research study. Therefore, to master the skill of pronunciation, one needs expert guidance initially and constant practice after that with a few sample words every day. The art of articulation requires the participants to practice their skills and make them into a habit.

**Limitations**

This study has some limits. The present research study has investigated the listening and pronunciation problems faced by EFL Undergraduates learning English as a Foreign Language. The study has focused on qualitative and quantitative research methods using questionnaires, recorded speech samples, and pronunciation tests to analyze learners’ performance orally through Blackboard LMS on English pronunciation. The methodology and tools of this research study will address the students’ opinions on pronunciation skills.

**Conclusion**

The English language is becoming increasingly crucial in Saudi Arabia and around the world. No one can deny the value of the English language nowadays because it is the language of science, technology, trade, and global communication. Everyone needs to know how to pronounce words correctly to communicate effectively with others. This study focused on pronunciation issues encountered by Arab female undergraduate EFL students at Qassim University. As part of its methodology, it used questionnaires, recorded speech samples, and pronunciation tests to analyze learners’ performance orally through repetition drills to help participants articulate the sounds of English using the Blackboard Learning Management System. It was experiential that most participants improved their pronunciation skills from preliminary investigation stage I to primary investigation stage II. There has been tremendous progress in the pronunciation skills of participants from the initial pronunciation test to the final pronunciation test. The study aimed to train students using pronunciation tests and phonemic inventory through repetition and imitation to overcome pronunciation and fossilized miscues and improve their pronunciation of English words and sentences. The study found that our EFL undergraduates’ pronunciation enhanced due to their constant motivation and willingness to participate in the designed tests through Blackboard Collaborate Ultra LMS. To overcome their mispronunciation problems, the EFL undergraduates had a joyful desire to improve their pronunciation skills. They were highly motivated to learn the sounds of English to improve their pronunciation and listening ability. The study revealed that mastering pronunciation requires expert guidance at first, followed by consistent practice with a few sample words every day. Finally, the researchers hoped that the study’s findings would aid in teaching pronunciation and, as a result, resolve adult female Arab EFL learners’ pronunciation issues.

**Acknowledgments**

The researchers would like to acknowledge the Deanship of Scientific Research, Qassim University, for funding this project’s publication. Our thanks to the English Language and
Translation Department faculty, College of Sciences and Arts at Al-Asyah. We are grateful to the level five participants from the Department of English Language and Translation.

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References


**Appendix A. Participants questionnaire Preliminary investigation stage I**

**Table 1. Summary of participants’ responses to the statements of questionnaire preliminary investigation stage I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- As a learner, I did not learn how to differentiate between /p/ and /b/ sounds correctly during school.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16 (50%)</td>
<td>5 (15.6%)</td>
<td>1 (3.1%)</td>
<td>7 (21.9%)</td>
<td>3 (9.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- As a learner, I usually get confused and mix between /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ sounds.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15 (46.9%)</td>
<td>4 (12.5%)</td>
<td>6 (18.8%)</td>
<td>3 (9.4%)</td>
<td>4 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- As a learner, I usually get confused and mix /ɪ/ and /e/ sounds.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17 (53.1%)</td>
<td>5 (15.6%)</td>
<td>3 (9.4%)</td>
<td>1 (3.1%)</td>
<td>6 (18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- As a learner, I usually get confused with /i/ short vowel and /iː/ long vowel sounds.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15 (46.9%)</td>
<td>6 (18.8%)</td>
<td>6 (9.4%)</td>
<td>3 (9.4%)</td>
<td>5 (15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- As a learner, I don't know how to differentiate between /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ sounds.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16 (50%)</td>
<td>7 (21.9%)</td>
<td>3 (9.4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- As a learner, I don't know how to differentiate between /æ/ and /ɑː/ sounds.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14 (43.8%)</td>
<td>4 (12.5%)</td>
<td>6 (18.8%)</td>
<td>4 (12.5%)</td>
<td>4 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- As a learner, I find it difficult to pronounce the following minimal pairs meet and meat.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15 (46.9%)</td>
<td>8 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1 (3.1%)</td>
<td>4 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8- As a learner, I always get confused and mix between /s/ and /θ/ sounds as in thousand and south.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

9- As a learner, I face pronunciation difficulties in general usage of words due to the differences between Arabic and English language.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3</td>
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10- As a learner, I get confused when I pronounce the following words leave and great (diphthongs).

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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11- As a learner, I get confused when I pronounce /r/ as in doctor and teacher.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
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12- As a learner, I don’t differentiate between weak and strong forms as in that, could and have.

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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
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13- As a learner, I usually mix between /dʒ/ and /g/ sounds.

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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
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14- As a learner, I get confused with the pronunciation of /ʒ/ sound as in treasure, measure, and pleasure.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

15- As a learner, I get confused and mix the pronunciation of /s/ and /ʃ/ sounds.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16- As a learner, I usually get confused when I pronounce the/r/ sound as in car and cart.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Teaching Spoken Production in Global Contexts 2021

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Received: 7/20/2021 Accepted: 10/24/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Shaping and developing communication skills in non-linguistic faculties in higher education institutions remain relevant. Thus, the theoretical and methodological guidelines for training English professionally-oriented spoken production are among significant problems. Intending to overcome some related challenges, we conducted this study to investigate the efficiency of using presentational speeches based on authentic video materials. The main aim of the research was to analyze the problem from methodological and didactic perspectives and substantiate the theoretical and methodological principles of the professional training of monolingual students through the experimental verification of the effectiveness of the proposed methodology. To achieve the objectives of this study, in the first stage, we determined the efficiency of pedagogical conditions for developing the foreign language competence of students. Then we verified the efficiency of using presentational speeches in teaching Spoken Production. At the last stage, we analyzed the effectiveness of the proposed methods of forming and developing foreign language competence (Spoken Production) by using presentational speeches. The study sample included 45 students of the Sociology and Law Faculty in the National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”. We obtained the results that confirmed the efficiency of the presentational speech approach in teaching spoken production. Our study revealed that the presentational speech approach facilitates enhancement in the level of students' professional competence. These findings provide a good starting point for discussion and further research.

Keywords: political speeches, professional competence, professionally-oriented monologues in English, soft skills, spoken production

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.15
Introduction

By 2021, we will see students re-learn how to engage themselves in an educational process more effectively. This phenomenon can lead to the following results: the rapid development of online education. When we continue to learn online, we need to focus on adapting to challenges of new circumstances and remain communicative. Therefore, as an alternative to face-to-face communication, students attend online classes (Zoom, Skype, and others), visit web pages. To transform the message-knowledge into language and then into speech means retrieving from memory the right words and speech patterns arranging them into spoken production. However, in many circumstances, students have to work hard to transform messages into language that they do not engage in the perspective-taking required to reckon with what listeners do and do not know (Brown & Dell, 1987).

Blurring the boundaries between countries and intensive interaction with researchers have changed the concept of the world. Due to the Internet, new challenges have arisen for future specialists in every country. For a modern generation, it is not enough to be a professional in information technologies; moreover, it is necessary to know a foreign language, namely English, as a global lingua franca. Many foreign companies running businesses in Ukraine have partners abroad. Therefore, young people are motivated sufficiently to study a foreign language as a means of communication. Simultaneously, they need to develop other skills such as oral production in non-linguistic faculties in higher education institutions. The signing of the Memorandum between the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the British Council confirms prospects to develop new approaches to teaching the English language in Ukraine (Memorandum of Understanding dated 2020).

Besides, the complex tasks on more effective international communication, experience exchange, increased student mobility, access to information, and mutual understanding during professional activity could be visible in the modern labor market. Ukraine is geographically located on the European continent and takes part in active integration processes of the European legal space. That is why the specialists who are ready for international cooperation within the European associations are relevant.

The study of the current situation shows that the theoretical and methodological guidelines for training English professionally-oriented spoken production (after this EPOSP) for students of higher education institutions are among the most significant problems. We could highlight the following reasons:

1) structural transformations in higher education institutions (hereafter referred to as the creation of European level education), as a result, the requirement to shape professionally-oriented spoken production;
2) changes in the priorities of the higher education system, which currently emphasize the significance of humanitarian subjects and English in particular;
3) new requirements for the professional competence of future specialists in mediation or conflict resolution and law.

Thus, professionally-oriented oral production, namely a description, reasoning, persuading, is needed to achieve professional goals. Furthermore, the educational resources for individual work require special attention from ESP teachers. Since Ukrainian students lack the necessary skills to organize their practice without the careful supervision of teachers, the
problem of individual work is essential to engage students in self-education and develop their autonomous learning (Simkova & Tuliakova, 2020).

Literature Review

The native and foreign scholars studied the problem of skill improvement. In particular, they highlighted the structuring of professionally oriented production as a tool for business presentation (Popova, 2006); classification of monologue (Nikolayeva, 2003); characteristics of speech, namely the communicative, psychological, and linguistic features (Skalkin, 1989); composition-language forms of monologue (Batashov, 1988). Considering the rapid development of information exchanges, researchers have also examined the following aspects of oral production: presentation in English (Drab, 2005; Zadorozhna, 2007) and levels of competence formation in the professionally-oriented production (Burak, 2016). They studied persuasive shows (Bilous, 2017) and the methodology of foreign language skills development of monologue speech in blended learning (Bekisheva, 2018). Furthermore, they researched the improvement of spoken production based on the emotional characteristics, intellectual and professional aspects (Babjuk, 2019). Moreover, scientists studied the structure of argumentation, logical form and the defining elements of argumentation (Taylor, 2008). Furthermore, the analysis of the scientific researches draws our attention to the problem of oral production in lawyers teaching and its general characteristic (Dudley-Evans, 1998); to the use of professional terms and common word units in their metaphorical dimensions (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987); to the teaching of speaking, key issues and assessing speaking (Bailey, 2005), to the significance and the uses of authentic materials (Oguz, & Bahar, 2008). Richards & Rodgers (2001) studied the indicators and evaluation criteria, methods, and approaches in language learning.

Methodology

We used the following complex methods to achieve the purpose of the research:
1. Analysis, synthesis, systematization of scientific data contained in pedagogical, philosophical, and methodological literature;
2. Tests, surveys, interviews;
3. Educational experiment - to test and verify the effectiveness of the method of teaching spoken production;

Participants

We have chosen for our experiment four groups of the fifth-year students of the Faculty of Sociology and Law at “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute” in the amount of 45 people who study the discipline English for Professional Communication.

The students of our selected groups had approximately the same levels of knowledge, skills, and language abilities. Such conditions were necessary for the validity of our research.

Having analyzed the current state of the problem under study, it does not show an effective way of teaching spoken production. There are not enough sets of tasks and exercises to develop oral speech.
Instrument

In this study, we have used two types of instruments. The authors used a set of criteria for speech materials which consists of 3 points: authenticity, current interest, professional development. On the other hand, the researchers assessed their reliability using the Empirical frequency by Gubler (1978). The value was 3,142.

The objectives of the experimental work are:
- to determine the effectiveness of pedagogical conditions for developing foreign language competence of students in Sociology and Law Faculty;
- to verify the efficiency of using presentational speeches in teaching spoken production;
- to analyze the effectiveness of the proposed methods of forming and developing foreign language competence (Spoken Production) using presentational speeches.

The object of the study was the process of teaching EPOSP.

The research subject is the teaching EPOSP method to future specialists using presentational speeches based on authentic video materials.

The purpose of the research is to analyze the problem from methodological and didactic perspectives and substantiate the theoretical and methodological principles of the professional learning of monolingual students of Sociology and Law Faculty through the experimental verification of the effectiveness of the proposed methodology.

Research Procedure

Firstly, we considered the theoretical and methodological principles of students’ practicing. Moreover, the authors have analyzed modern approaches and requirements of current educational programs for teaching professionally-oriented monologues to produce professionally-oriented utterances in English during monologue speech.

Secondly, the researchers studied the essence and content of professional competence. The authors have also determined the structure and properties of English professionally-oriented monologue (to define the monologue description, monologue reasoning, and its variety of monologue-persuasion as functional types of monologue necessary for future professional activities. During the experiment, we have chosen and substantiated the approaches of SP practicing and designed a training model.

We determined the following tasks to achieve our goals:

The further step is to develop a system of tasks with the presentational speeches for EPOSP training. They are to test the effectiveness of the methodology and prepare guidelines for teachers. Furthermore, we proposed original videos (political statements and documentaries) as training material for EPOSP. We determined the criteria of their selection with the requirements of the future profession: authenticity, professional informativeness, accessibility of presentation, thematic relevance, situational and socio-cultural value. The videos show communication in real life, provoking emotional feedback, and as a result, they boost the learning of the material. This video material is an information resource and, at the same time, a speech sample for students to rely on in their effective communicative activity.
Original materials used in the constructivist environment enlighten a matter from various perspectives and give the learner a chance to acquire information about life (Terhart, 2003). Authentic learning environments have the students experience real-life events or situations. In these environments, students interact with the original materials and get the chance to comprehend the learned foreign language better and use it in real life (Oguz, & Bahar, 2008, p.334). We agree with M. Spelleri, who asserts that authentic materials have at least three points of learning: language, cultural insights, practical application (Spelleri, 2002). The undoubted advantage of their use is adjustable technical functions: video stop, repetition, volume adjustment, pause, silent viewing, visual effects.

**Results**

The authors performed the calculations to verify the research results using the methods of mathematical statistics using a non-parametric test of Pearson criterion $\chi^2$. This method helped to find out that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the presentational speech approach was applied in the learning process.

Furthermore, we conducted the pedagogical experiment at the National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”. Its objective was to confirm the effectiveness of teaching spoken production with regard to presentational speeches in 2019 and 2020. Four groups of fifth-year students of the Faculty of Sociology and Law took part in the experiment. Two groups in the first semester of the 2019/2020 academic year were as a control (C), and two groups in the second semester of the 2019/2020 academic year were experimental (E). The C involved 25 students, whereas the E involved 20 students.

We verified the effectiveness of the set of tasks of teaching EPOSP. The tasks consider the types of communicative situations based on “type of relationship”. The given characteristic of tasks enabled us to model various communicative situations, adequate to natural communication, to define the rules of educational actions. In addition, we studied the question of the essence of the psychological process of information exchange.

The public speeches, which were selected by us taking into account the specifics of the future activities of students, have a video series, which largely compensates for the lack of a natural language environment during learning. Producing a spoken production can be possible due to language skills: lexical, grammatical, phonetic (Babjuk, 2019, p.39). We propose to consider the criteria we have identified for the selection of speech material during learning:

- authenticity;
- current interest;
- professional development.

Also worked and trained in the use of appropriate language tools, following the objectives of a particular monologue, such as *I insist; We deem it plausible; In my persuasion; the main tenet; The common notion; It is my strong conviction that...; We need more light on a subject; We have a voice in smth...; We are secure in belief that...* etc.

There is a list of themes for teaching EPOSP:

- Presidential elections;
- Agitation;
- Social behavior and social standards;
- Piracy in Ukraine;
- Intellectual Property;
- Civic rights;
- Voluntary Discipline;
- Local Authorities.

The interpretation and analysis of the obtained results prove the effectiveness of presentation speeches for teaching EPOSP. We selected the set of tasks, based on presentational speeches.

Table 1. *Educational experiment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Experiment</th>
<th>The purpose of each stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Organization</td>
<td>The scientifically based assumption about the causes and patterns of connection of any phenomena or events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Implementation</td>
<td>The ratio of the organization of the material with the stages of teaching EPOSP in four experimental groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Data</td>
<td>Description of quality of knowledge acquisition in experimental groups and analysis of indicators of the previous section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interpretation</td>
<td>Analysis of indicators and substantiated proof of the hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is essential to highlight each stage of development of the hypothesis. The first stage is elaborating the research hypothesis. Exploring the issues of training EPOSP of the students of Sociology and Law Faculty, we analyzed methodological literature, which allowed us to formulate the following aspects:

1. Training of EPOSP is an integral part of English language learning for professional purposes in the 5th year because it meets the demands of the future professions and develops professional competencies;
2. The set of tasks and exercises for the development of EPOSP involves the use of presentational speeches.

The second stage of hypothesis development is the designing of its primary presupposition and the expected consequences. We hypothesized that the higher-level achievement of EPOSP is possible with the use of the presentational speech approach as an integral component of the overall foreign language acquisition process.

We should admit that the post-experimental task was similar to the previously conducted pre-experimental one. All students’ answers were recorded and later analyzed. So, teachers should create a situation of success in the audience to encourage students to reflect (Babjuk, 2019). To process the results of training, we used methods to study quantitative characteristics.

During the analysis of EPOSP, we paid attention to the approximation (standard pronunciation). Standard pronunciation is when phonological errors are absent. At the same time, we share the opinion of Bilyaev (1959). He stated that interpretation of students’ concepts in foreign words from the beginning creates conditions when they are both for the thinking and
correct use of foreign words and patterns in their speech activity. For correct somatization of terms in EPOSP, it is necessary to focus on particular contexts, the content of which should not go beyond the profession. Due to inclusion in this context, terms perform the definitive function. They express scientific concepts and involve information and formulation of thought (Grinyuk & Semenchuk, 2006).

The criteria for dividing the participants of an experiment into those who have "effect" (learning efficiency coefficient 0.7 and above) and those who “have no effect” (learning efficiency coefficient below 0.7) will be the results of pre- and post-experimental sections. To conduct a study using Fisher's test, we formulate statistical hypotheses.

1. Hypothesis 0 (H0): the number of students who achieved a sufficient coefficient of learning by the results of the post-experimental team, not more than the number of students who achieved a sufficient coefficient of studying by the results of the pre-experimental part.

2. Alternative hypothesis (H1): the number of students who achieved an adequate learning coefficient according to the results of a post-experimental part is higher than the number of students who achieved an acceptable coefficient of training according to the results of the pre-experimental team. The table of empirical frequencies was constructed based on two values of a sign: "There is an effect" and "there is no effect."

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<th>Table 2. The Empirical frequency</th>
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According to the results of the pre-experimental section, only 15 students received a sufficient coefficient. According to the results of the post-experimental part, all 40 students overcame the barrier with a value of 0.7. Following E. Gubler (1978), we assume that 100% is the angle ϕ = 3.142. Based on the statistical table of the value of the angle ϕ for different percentages according to V. Urbach (1975), we determine the amount of ϕ, which corresponds to the total number of students.

The presented results prove the practicality of using presentation speeches for teaching EPOSP, as E-students showed the best effect.

Discussions
In addition, the experiment allowed identifying factors that negatively affect the results of training. The first one was difficulties in understanding original videos. Most students do not have enough listening skills. Therefore, we consider it reasonable to use original and authentic video materials systematically that results in the development of listening skills. Bajrami, L. & Ismaili, M. (2016) stated that videos can provide much more information for listeners and keep them attention focused on aural material.
The second essential point is difficulties performing exercises to master the skills of building SP statements on a professionally-related topic. We believe that consistent implementation in combination with original videos must be essential to overcome the above difficulties.

Moreover, difficulties of unprepared EPOSP among students are widespread. To consider them, we could propose a consistent increase in the volume of EPOSP statements during professionally-oriented monologues-descriptions and monologues-reasoning.

Conclusion

Considering the types of communicative situations based on "type of relationship," we characterized the types of monologue. Therefore, it made it possible to create a variety of communicative situations, appropriate to natural communication and determine the system of the efficient learning process. In addition, we studied the issue of the essence of the psychological attributes of information exchange to define the types of necessary SPs. Based on the above, the authors created a theoretically grounded set of exercises in teaching English-professionally oriented spoken production of monolingual students of Sociology and Law Faculty. Moreover, we analyzed and interpreted the results of the experiment and presented the statistical processing. Based on the study, we developed recommendations on teaching the English professionally-oriented spoken production.

Moreover, in highlighting the aspects of English professionally-oriented monologue and in the process of comparing the linguistic features of monologue, analysis of phonetic, lexical, and grammatical components of prepared and spontaneous monologue, we justified the use of prepared professionally-oriented monologue. The study of the theoretical aspect of the development of EPOSP skills and the conducted experiment became the basis for the guidelines for EPOSP training.

Thus, having analyzed the problem from methodological and didactic perspectives and substantiated the theoretical and methodological principles of the professional training of monolingual students through the experimental verification of the effectiveness of the proposed methodology, we can conclude that the experiment confirmed our hypothesis. The teaching in the fifth year allowed students to master the speech skills construction, as it took place based on a set of exercises with authentic videos selected according to the professional thematic orientation. Furthermore, we took into account student knowledge to build an effective English-language professionally-oriented spoken production. The results of the implementation in teaching practice confirmed the effectiveness of the methodology as well.

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References


Aggressive Language in Literature: A Pragmatic Approach

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Abstract
Aggression is a negative form of an anti-social behavior. It is produced because of a particular reason, desire, want, need, or due to the psychological state of the aggressor. It injures others physically or psychologically. Aggressive behaviors in human interactions cause discomfort and disharmony among interlocutors. The paper aims to identify how aggressive language manifests itself in the data under scrutiny in terms of the pragmatic paradigm. Two British literary works are the data; namely, Look Back in Anger by John Osborne (1956), and The Birthday Party by Harold Pinter (1957). This paper endeavors to answer the question of how aggressive language is represented in literature pragmatically? It is hoped to be significant to linguistic and psychological studies in that it clarifies how aggression is displayed in human communications linguistically. Qualitative and quantitative analyses are conducted to verify the findings. It ends with some concluding remarks, the most important of which are: insulting, belittling, ridiculing and threatening are prevalent speech acts; simile, hyperbole, metaphor and repetition appear due to Grice's maxims breaching while the use of taboo words, calling names, or abusive words are the impoliteness strategies that are distinguished in the data.

Keywords: aggression, literary plays, Look Back in Anger, Grice maxims, pragmatics, The Birthday Party, types of communication

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.16
Introduction

Both Look Back in Anger of Osborne (1956), and The Birthday Party of Pinter (1957) are images of how the dominant, powerful British society declined after the world wars (Smith, 1986). This decline is related to reasons like losing jobs, food, houses, lovers and family members. These instances affect people's feeling of peace or being secured, and safe (Carter & McRae, 2001). This means that the bad and difficult conditions were reflected on human interactions. Consequently, there was a real damage in individuals' behaviors and relationships. As it is assumed that literary works are representations of society, this research paper endeavors to scrutinize how aggression is manifested pragmatically in personal communications as literature portrays them. Aggression is argued to be a prevalent phenomenon in such interactions. Thus, it needs to be investigated so as to unravel how it is conveyed. In this case, people would be aware of it in terms of production, or recognition. The personal and social identity as well as people's relationships can be damaged if aggressive language is not displayed and explained to the public. Here lies the importance of studying this phenomenon as it is portrayed in the literary works chosen for the analysis.

Literature Review

Many scholars have studied how aggression and violence are found in many literary works. Malkin (1992), for instance, investigated verbal violence in many contemporary dramatic works. The focus, however, was not on the linguistic representations of aggression nor was it on the pragmatic strategies that convey it. Moreover, no careful attention has been paid in those works to the non-verbal representation of aggression since it can be verbal and non-verbal. The first is represented via words and causes psychological hurt whereas the second can be realized by acts like shouting, yelling, ignoring, throwing things and the like (Bayer & Cegala, 1992). It is thought that aggression has been a feature of personal communication in most societies. As a negative behavior, it should be studied so as to preserve the physical and psychological state of people and render their social communication harmonious and smooth.

Communication Styles

Communication is a reciprocity process of transforming information among individuals via words or signs (Hemavathy & Devi, 2016). Bocar (2017) argued that any message is conveyed accurately according to the person's behavior, attitude or thought verbally or non-verbally. Nielsen (2008) distinguished four communicative styles: aggressive, passive, assertive, and passive-aggressive. Aggressive communication means taking care of one's rights and disregarding others' rights. It is disruptive because it generates dissatisfaction and causes disharmony (Hemavathy & Devi, 2016, p. 119). An aggressive communicator is close-minded and he cannot listen to others; he is poor to conceive others' points of view (Bocar, 2017, p. 3). For example, 'Your time is not important to me, just do as I say' (Nielsen, 2008, p.67). This indicates how the speaker does not respect others and dominates them. Passive communication involves taking care of the rights of others in a manipulative manner. The characteristics of a passive communicator make him indirect or weak in speaking up (Bocar, 2017, p. 3). No concern is given to the person's wants, needs, desires, or opinions, e.g., 'My mother always shouts at me, it is part of her personality' (Nielsen, 2008, p. 68). Assertive communication takes care of one's rights with considering the rights of others (Nielsen, 2008, p. 65). It is the clear, honest, and direct expression of the individual's needs, desires, thoughts, and feelings (Hemavathy & Devi, 2016, p.119). Here, the communicators are concerned with maintaining the right, and integrity of others, and
themselves in respectful attitudes. For example, 'That may be true, but I'm not interested at the moment' (Nielsen, 2008, p. 70). Passive-aggressive communication considers the rights of others at the expense of the speaker (Nielsen, 2008, p. 65). The communicators may feel angry, and helpless, but they behave in an indirect way of hostility; e.g., 'Mum, what do you think I am? Stupid?' (Nielsen, 2008, p. 70).

**Aggression**

Aggression has been defined from different perspectives. The behaviorists define it as a response that inflicts harm towards the receivers; a response that consists of noxious stimulus to another organism (Buss, 1961, p. 1). The social-psychological field defines aggression as any behavior that is intentionally achieved to harm another person besides the awareness of the target person to avoid harm (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 28). The psychological field identifies it as a behavior that is unrelated to emotional, or mental features (Warburton & Anderson, 2015, p. 373).

**Motivations of Aggression**

Aggression is regarded as a problematic social phenomenon. Infante et al. (1984, p. 77), however, state that there are some causes for aggressive behaviors. *Frustration* is generated due to the hostility that results from disillusionment. *Social learning* can cause aggression when an individual learns aggressive actions from another character by observing his behavior. For example, a child who always watches aggressive cartoons may behave aggressively with others because he imitates others' behaviors unconsciously. *Argumentative skill deficiency* is the major reason for verbal aggression (Infante et al., 1989, p. 5). It is the lack of individuals' verbal skills in that they cannot deal with some issues which lead them to social conflicts. Moreover, aggression is triggered by other causes such as seeking safety, feeling of belongingness, self-esteem, self-confidence, or achieving needs, and building self-actualization (Lozovska & Gudaitė, 2013, p. 361). As such, aggression is defined in this paper as any disharmonious form of communication among interlocutors which is a consequence of previous reasons or causes. It is an unsuccessful kind of communication that is realized by verbal, and/or non-verbal acts causing psychological, or physical harm as well as dissatisfaction.

**Pragmatic Context**

Pragmatics is related to the implicated meaning, and what surrounds it (Leech, 1983, p.1). According to Widdowson (1996, p. 61), it implies the meaning that contributes to the source of communication as an attempt to connect the thoughts of users to their needs in a specific context. Hymes (1974, p. 55-63) classifies the features of context into: situations, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norms, and genres. Those factors are important in specifying meaning in human interactions. Many pragmatic theories can be utilized to grasp meaning. This research is concerned with three of them: speech acts, cooperative principles, and impoliteness strategies. They are the pragmatic issues that are chosen to scrutinize the aggressive language in the data under investigation.

**Speech Acts**

Language in society aims at strengthening the interrelated pivots of communication among users so as to have a clear mutual correspondence. It is proposed that there are three types of acts for any utterance. The locutionary act (literary meaning), illocutionary act (pragmatic meaning),
and perlocutionary act (effective meaning) (Austin, 1962, p. 102). Saying is performing speech acts; it is the essence of Austin's work (Searle, 1969, p. 16). Speech acts are divided into five macro-categories that depend mainly on what speakers typically do (representatives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declaratives). These acts are further classified into other micro categories. They are differentiated by their felicity conditions (propositional, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions). For instance, promising is a micro speech act that belongs to the commissives.

**Cooperative Principle**

The cooperative principle, proposed by Grice (1975), is essential in natural communication. It has four pragmatic maxims; quantity (keep specific information), quality (saying things with evidence), relation (giving related information), and manner (involving well-sequences). If parties do not follow the same order in each conversation, these maxims are breached via violating, opting-out, flouting and infringing a maxim (Grice, 1975, p. 45). In this respect, breaching any maxim, a figure of speech may result such as metaphor, hyperbole, repetition, and so on (Grice, 1989, p. 34). Repetition, or tautology where a speaker repeats a sentence, phrase, or word for emphasis as in 'A man is a man' is one example of breaching the quantity maxim (Cuddon, 2013, p. 712). Breaching the maxim of quality, for instance, gives a metaphor which is a comparison between objects and people of some similar features (Wales, 2001, p. 250). A simile is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two, or more different things to enhance or clarify an image; it is realized by the use of 'as, like, just' (Cuddon, 2013, p. 657). Cutting (2002, p. 37) states that hyperbole is a form of meaning that has an additional expression, exaggeration, or manipulation.

**Impoliteness**

Culpeper (1996) introduced the theory of impoliteness which is based on Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory; he argued that understanding impoliteness is impossible without recognizing politeness (Culpeper, 1996, p. 356). Impolite behaviors represent disharmony in communication in social interactions (Culpeper et al., 2003, p. 1546). In later works, Culpeper (2005, p. 38) defined impoliteness in that it "comes about when: 1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or 2) the hearer perceives, and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)". The hallmark of the impoliteness model is that it is based on a real analytical framework because Culpeper worked on the real verbal and written data of impolite behaviors (Mullany & Stockwell, 2010, p.72). Culpeper (1996, p. 356) identified some impoliteness strategies. Here are the relevant ones to this work:

1. **Bald-on-record impoliteness**: the face-threatening act is produced in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way; therefore, the circumstances of the face are irrelevant or minimized. In a nutshell, this strategy is used when the interlocutor intends to hurt others.
2. **Positive impoliteness**: it is the damage/attack to the hearer's positive face wants. The realizations of this strategy are: ignoring others deliberately, using abusive language (taboo words, swears), talking about inappropriate issues, and calling names, among others.
3. **Negative impoliteness**: it is the damage/attack to the hearer's negative face wants such as to frighten, scorn, or ridicule others.
4. **Withhold politeness**: it is the expected work of politeness to be unused, or absent (Culpeper, 1996, p.356- 358).
Model of Analysis

The analytical framework of this study is based on the pragmatic tools that have been explained above. They are the speech act of Searle (1969), the cooperative principle of Grice (1975), and Culpeper's impoliteness theory (1996). It is worthy to remember that four macro-speech acts are included as declaratives are not expected to be found in the data. The breaching of any maxim may yield one figure of speech like metaphor, hyperbole, simile, and repetition. Impoliteness is concerned with the bald-on-record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and the withhold of politeness strategies. Thus, Figure one engineers the analytical framework of aggressive language in the literary works chosen for the analysis in this research.

Data and Analysis

Two British plays from the same period, i.e., the fifties, are chosen to be the data of analysis in this research paper. The aim is find out how aggression is conveyed at that time in the British society. Some extracts are selected from each play to be part of the qualitative analysis whereas the other instances of aggressive language in the two plays are included in the quantitative analysis. Aggressive examples in each extract are underlined. It is worthy to mention that the unit of analysis in this paper is the utterance.

The First Play Look Back in Anger

Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* is characterized by its theme, and characterization that serve the purpose of the study (Osborne, 1978). It has three acts that reflect the British man's aggression towards others (Tecimer, 2005, p. 11). Jimmy is the hero of the play who represents the aggressive man in British society. He is unsatisfied with his job as an educated man because he thinks he deserves a better life. Jimmy is a villain character that has destructive actions directed towards his friend (Cliff) who lives with him and towards Jimmy's wife (Alison). Because of Jimmy's aggressiveness, his wife leaves him finally forever (Osborne, 1978). Here are some example extracts of aggression in this play.
**Extract One**

Jimmy: Why do I do this every Sunday? Even the book reviews seem to be the same as last week's. Different books _ same reviews. Have you finished that one yet?

Cliff: Not yet.

Jimmy: I've just read three whole columns on the English Novel. Half of it's in French. Do the Sunday papers make you feel ignorant?

Cliff: Not 'arf.

Jimmy: Well, you are ignorant. You're just a peasant. What about you? You're not a peasant are you? (p.10).

**Context:** This conversation occurs between the three characters, Jimmy (the husband), Alison (Jimmy's wife) and their friend (Cliff) who lives with them. The husband is always angry as he shouts, insults, and ridicules his friend, his wife and her parents whether directly or indirectly. The reason behind his aggressiveness lies in his dissatisfaction with the life he leads.

**Pragmatic analysis:** When Jimmy says 'You are ignorant' … 'You're just a peasant' he directs his words to his friend Cliff. Jimmy claims that he is the only educated person. Ignorant and peasant are aggressive words in communicating with friends. Hence, the utterance is an expressive act of insulting. According to Meibauer (2016, p. 157), the insulting act has the following felicity conditions: 1. Propositional content condition: the speaker's speech has an insulted function. 2. Preparatory condition: the speaker insults the hearer without motive for the insult or he may have one. 3. Sincerity condition: the speaker wants the hearer to feel insulted. 4. Essential condition: the speaker must affect the hearer to feel insulted.

On the other hand, 'you are ignorant' and 'You're just a peasant' are indirect speech acts towards Alison, Jimmy's wife. The husband always belittles Alison by saying abusive words. The context of the situation indicates that the italicized 'are' is a reference to injure Alison indirectly. The belittling act has the following felicity conditions (Mehdi, 2020, p.130): 1. Propositional content condition: the speaker assumes a negative aspect in the hearer. 2. Preparatory conditions: a. speaker holds that hearer is not important in terms of previous premises in speaker's mind, or aim. b. speaker believes that he can do so and has the power to give such unimportance to the hearer. 3. Sincerity conditions: a. speaker shows that the hearer is not important due to personal desire or belief on the side of the speaker. b. It is useful for the speaker to communicate that belittling. 4. Essential condition: speaker wants to communicate hearer's unimportance to others for a purpose or desire.

The positive impoliteness strategy is represented in this extract by the use of the swearing word 'peasant' in Jimmy's speech. Moreover, the aggressive phrase 'You're just a peasant' is a figure of speech of simile in terms of maxims breaching. In his utterance, Jimmy refers directly to Cliff and indirectly to Alison. Thus, Jimmy's behavior is in contrast with his claim of being an educated person as his words are full of aggression.

**Extract Two**

Cliff: Leave her alone, I said.

Jimmy: (shouting) All right, dear. Go back to sleep. It was only me Talking. Do you know? Talking? Remember? I'm sorry.

Cliff: Stop yelling. I'm trying to read.
Jimmy: Why do you bother? You can't understand a word of it.
Cliff: Uh-huh.
Jimmy: You're too ignorant.
Cliff: Yea, and uneducated. Now shut up, will you?
Jimmy: Why don't you get my wife to explain it to you? She's educated. That's right, isn't it? (p.11)

**Context:** In this utterance, Cliff tries to protect Alison from Jimmy's aggressive behavior. However, Jimmy goes on shouting and yelling at his wife as a sign of disrespect as he thinks that she is uneducated and unattractive. Other people, however, find her educated and attractive.

**Pragmatic analysis:** In this utterance, both verbal and non-verbal acts appear. The contextual situation illustrates that 'shouting' and 'yelling' are non-verbal acts of aggression. While verbal behavior is represented by the expressive speech act of belittling. The utterance 'you're too ignorant' is a representative speech act of negative affirming (see Searle, 1969, p. 66 for the felicity conditions of affirming). According to Searle & Vanderveken (1985, p. 15), each illocutionary act achieves the same point but in a different degree of strength with particular features that distinguish one verb from another. Affirming is usually performed to carry the positive assertion instead of the negative one; it differs from stating in that stating gives a full account of doing something and it is connected to the setting of something, or edification of the hearer (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, p 183). The other speech act here is that of ridiculing which is exemplified in saying 'She's educated'. Jimmy ridicules Alison because he considers her an uneducated woman. The ridiculing act has the following felicity conditions (Mehdi, 2020, p. 132): 1. Propositional content condition relates to the illocutionary force of the act which is an offense to the hearer. 2. Preparatory conditions: a. speaker specifies a moral, ethical or physical flaw in hearer, even if not real to some others. b. speaker has authority to issue such an act concerning hearer. 3. Sincerity conditions: speaker wants to present a negative picture of hearer to others. 4. Essential conditions: producing the act counts as an attempt to offend hearer.

The positive impoliteness strategy is noticed here because Jimmy uses the abusive word 'too ignorant' to refer to Alison indirectly. The negative impoliteness strategy is exemplified in Cliff's utterance to Jimmy in saying 'shut up'. When Jimmy says 'she's educated', he ridicules the wife sarcastically. It is another form of negative impoliteness strategy.

**Extract Three**
Jimmy: Put the kettle on.
Cliff: Put it on yourself. You've creased up my paper.
Jimmy: I'm the only one who knows how to treat a paper, or anything else, in this house. Girl here wants to know whether her boyfriend will lose all respect for her if she gives him what he asks for. Stupid bitch. (p.12-13)

**Context:** Jimmy wants Cliff to make some tea for him. The latter refuses because he is upset by the act of creasing the paper. Jimmy sees himself as the only one who can deal with paper. He refers to his wife aggressively but indirectly.
Pragmatic analysis: Jimmy is addressing his friend in a directive speech act of ordering. The ordering act commonly occurs if one has power over others (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, p. 201). Thus, if it is compared with commanding; it differs and it has less authority. The felicity conditions of the ordering speech act can be outlined as follows: 1. Propositional condition: a future act by hearer which is in the benefit of speaker. 2. Preparatory conditions: a. Hearer is able to do this act. b. Speaker has the authority to issue such an act as far as hearer is concerned. 3. Sincerity condition: speaker wants hearer to do the future act. 4. Essential condition: producing the act counts as an attempt to get the hearer to do the act.

Aggressive language is realized here by the absence of politeness. Withholding politeness is an impolite act. The expressive speech act of belittling is used in this utterance to refer to Alison. The positive impoliteness is found because Jimmy uses the taboo word ‘bitch’ referring to the wife. The last turn reveals that Jimmy uses hyperbole to address Alison. He breaches the quality maxim when addressing his wife as 'Stupid bitch' because he has no evidence that she is as such. This metaphor refers to the wife.

Extract Four
Jimmy: Have you seen her brother?... I only met him once myself. He asked me to step outside when I told his mother she was evil-minded.
Cliff: And did you?
Jimmy: Certainly not. He's a big chap…Yes, that's the little woman's family. They're what they sound like: sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous.
Cliff: I'll bet that concert's started by now. Shall I put it on?
Jimmy: I looked up that……
Cliff: What was that?
Jimmy: I told you—pusillanimous. Do you know what it means?...
Alison: God help me, ….
Jimmy: Why don't you? That would be something, anyway. But I haven't told you what it means yet have I? (Picks up dictionary.) In fact, … I quote Pusillanimous. Adjective. Wanting of firmness of mind, of small courage, having a little mind, mean spirited, … Behold the Lady Pusillanimous. (Shouting hoarsely.) … (p.21-22).

Context: This extract is between Jimmy and Cliff about Alison's family. Here, Jimmy talks badly about them. He says her mother is evil-minded. He uses many abusive words to describe Alison's family. Jimmy explains what those words mean as he intends to injure Alison. The situation is typically aggressive.

Pragmatic analysis: This example illustrates an expressive speech act of belittling. The abusive words used by Jimmy towards his wife's family are 'sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous'. Such words hurt feelings. Furthermore, he insistently gives the meaning of such words saying that ‘Pusillanimous’ means having a little mind or mean spirited, etc. By insisting on injuring Alison's feelings, Jimmy issues the representative speech act of negative affirming. According to his opinion, she is unimportant and having low status. The use of the non-verbal act is realized by 'Shouting hoarsely '. Shouting at others causes fear to most people. It is an act of disrespect and humiliation. The positive impoliteness strategy is observed in the use of these taboo words which
attack the wife's positive face. The repetition of these abusive words counts as an exaggeration to give a hyperbolic sense.

**Extract Five**

Jimmy: Helena, have you ever watched somebody die? No, don't move away. It doesn't look dignified enough for you.
Helena: If you come any nearer, I will slap your face.
Jimmy: I hope you won't make the mistake of thinking for one moment that I am a gentleman. (p. 56-57).

**Context:** Jimmy talks to Helena, his wife's friend, asking her if she has seen someone dying in front of her. This ironic question makes her angry and she says to him 'I will slap your face'. Again, the extract is characterized by aggression.

**Pragmatic analysis:** The aggressive language is represented because when Jimmy uses the word 'die', he is threatening Helena indirectly. It is a commissive speech act of threatening. According to Al Shamiri & Abbas (2016, p. 11), the threatening act meets the following conditions: 1. Prepositional content condition: the preposition of threat should base on the future act, and be uttered in a specific situation. 2. Preparatory conditions: the addresser has to know that the act is not preferable by the addressee. 3. Sincerity condition: the speaker's intention to carry out the act of threatening is serious. 4. Essential conditions: the addresser insists on making the addressee does the act in virtue of his authority over the addressee. 'I will slap your face' is another threatening act by Helena. When he says that he is not a gentleman, he admits his aggressiveness by issuing this representative speech act of negative affirming. Jimmy says that he is not a 'gentleman' which acknowledges his aggression. This counts as a threatening act in that he can easily hurt others as he is not a gentleman. The whole interaction is impolite as Jimmy's and Helena's negative faces are attacked, respectively. This sarcastic manner of using the word 'die' indicates carelessness and disrespect concerning others' life. It is a ridicule of the negative impoliteness strategy.

**Extract Six**

Jimmy: (to his wife) You don't believe in all that stuff. Why you don't believe in anything. You're just doing it to be vindictive, aren't you? Why- why are you letting her influence you like this?
Alison: Why, why, why, why! That's word's pulling my head off!
Jimmy: And as long as you're around, I'll go on using it (p. 54).

**Context:** The use of the word 'vindictive' proves that Jimmy treats his wife aggressively. The repetition of the word 'why' bothers the wife as if she is in a questioning session.

**Pragmatic analysis:** The utterance 'I'll go on using it' is a commissive speech act of promising (see Searle (1969: 61) for its felicity conditions). He promises to use this way of questioning with his wife in all their future interactions. This act of promising has an aggressive implication. The use of the word 'vindictive' is impolite in that it destroys the positive face of Alison.
The Second Play The Birthday Party

This play of Pinter (1957) starts on the morning of the alleged birthday and ends the next morning (Pinter, 2007, p. 1-3). Stanley is the nominal character of the play. Goldberg and McCann are the strangers who interrogate and intimidate Stanley (Pinter, 2007, p. 15). Even though they never actually realize what he has done. They intend to accuse him of murdering his wife and then they take him to Monty, an unrevealed thing in the whole play. Goldberg and McCann use aggression as a weapon to control Stanley and dominate him. Finally, their tormenting makes a mental breakdown to him (Carter & McRae, 2001, p. 369). Verbal aggression in British society is exemplified in this play (Majhi, 2018, p. 1).

Extract One

Goldberg: A warm night.
Stanley: [turning.] Don't mess me about!
Goldberg: I beg your pardon?
Stanley: [moving downstage.] I'm afraid there's been a mistake. We're booked out. Your room is taken. Mrs. Boles forgot to tell you. You'll have to find somewhere else.
Goldberg: Are you the manager here?
Stanley: That's right.
Goldberg: Is it a good game?
Stanley: I run the house. I'm afraid you and your friend will have to find other accommodation.
Goldberg: (rising). Oh, I forgot, I must congratulate you on your birthday. (Offering his hand.) Congratulations.
Stanley: (ignoring hand). Perhaps you're deaf.
Goldberg: No…What a thing to celebrate-birth! Like getting up in the morning. ... Getting up in the morning, they say, what is it? Your skin's crabby, you need a shave, your eyes are full of muck, your mouth as like a boghouse, the palms of your hands are full of sweat, your nose is clogged up, your feel cheerful… (p. 30).

Context: In this extract, Goldberg initiates the utterance with greetings. Stanley does not answer appropriately because he is anxious and he never welcomes Goldberg's arrival. He tries to persuade Goldberg to leave the boarding house. Goldberg is aware that he is afraid, but he insists on showing his power over Stanley. Goldberg continues in ridiculing his social position, but the latter keeps resisting him.

Pragmatic analysis: Goldberg's greeting is not answered by Stanley. Thus, the withholding of politeness strategy appears. Stanley is humiliated by Goldberg's superiority over him from the first moment. The belittling expressive speech act is represented by Goldberg's utterance 'I beg your pardon'. It means that they are careless of Stanley's worries. The ridiculing expressive speech act is represented in the utterance: 'are you the manager?', said by Goldberg. Stanley behaves as the owner of the house and he tries to make Goldberg leaves the boarding house. 'Is it a good game?' is an expressive speech act of accusation because Goldberg uses his power to intimidate Stanley and he accuses him of committing the crime which is never explained clearly throughout the whole play. It is an alleged crime. The act of accusation meets the following felicity conditions (Ribeiro, 2012, p. 164-165): 1. Propositional content condition: The speaker predicates the hearer is responsible for the existence of a particular state of affairs. 2. Preparatory condition:
The state of the affair is bad. 3. Sincerity condition: The speaker is aware of the other person's behaviors. 4. Essential condition: The hearer considers it as an accusation.

The ignoring acts are used by both speakers in the following turns: firstly; when Goldberg moves to congratulate Stanley, secondly; the latter does not respond. These are non-verbal aggressive behaviors. The word '…deaf' is abusive because it attacks the positive face of Goldberg. In the last turn, Goldberg goes on using abusive words and calling names referring to Stanley's life. They are unsuitable expressions that injure Stanley. According to the context, Goldberg insists on uttering abusive words that illustrate the representative speech act of negative affirming. The context reveals the exemplification of positive impoliteness strategy by attacking Stanley's positive face when Goldberg uses calling names. Goldberg compares the waking up of Stanley to his birthday party. This comparison is metaphorical in that Stanley is not prepared for his party. He says: 'Your skin's crabby, you need a shave, your eyes are full of muck, your mouth as like a boghouse, the palms of your hands are full of sweat, your nose is clogged up, your feel cheerful'. All these words describe the state of Stanley when he wakes up in the morning. This metaphor is aggressive as it causes uncomfortableness to Stanley.

**Extract Two**

Goldberg: Why did you never get married?
McCann: She was waiting at the porch.
Goldberg: You skedaddled from the wedding.
McCann: He left her in the lurch.
Goldberg: You left her in the pudding club.
McCann: She was waiting at the church.
Goldberg: Webber! Why did you change your name?
Stanley: I forgot the other one.
Goldberg: What's your name now?
Stanley: Joe Soap.
Goldberg: You stink of sin.
McCann: I can smell it. (p. 34).

**Context:** Goldberg and McCann use abusive language with Stanley in questioning him. They accuse him that he killed his wife. Then, they ask him why did not he get married. It is a confusing situation composed of a series of questions. They offend him indirectly to reach their goal of taking him with them to the Monty which is an organization that is unknown to him. They never give him a chance to answer. The utterances contain unsuitable expressions. They cause psychological harm to Stanley.

**Pragmatic analysis:** Disharmonious interaction characterizes this extract. The insulting speech act is realized when Goldberg and McCann use abusive words as: in 'porch' (which means she is a bad lady), 'skedaddled' (which means irresponsible), 'lurch' (meaning unstable), 'pudding club' (which is a bad place for a meeting), and 'stink of sin' (which means his sin has a particular smell that can be smelled). The positive impoliteness strategy is realized here because Goldberg and McCann call names against Stanley. The 'stink of sin' is a metaphor because they compare the sin to a perfume with a bad smell.
Extract Three
McCann: Who are you, Webber?
Goldberg: What makes you think you exist?
McCann: You're dead.
Goldberg: You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour! (p. 36).

Context: The use of successive rapid questions with Stanley is cruel and contemptible. They ask him in a way as if he is not a human being. They use the word 'who' which indicates an unknown person but they know him well. They show all meanings of aggression in their way of addressing Stanley.

Pragmatic analysis: The belittling expressive speech act appears here. The repetition of 'You're dead' realizes the negative affirming act in this extract. The context demonstrates the use of abusive words like 'exist, dead, can't live, can't think, can't love and nothing but an odour'. Goldberg and McCann injure Stanley's feelings, emotions, and social status. The negative impoliteness strategy is represented because of the use of ridiculous words that attack Stanley's negative face by Goldberg and McCann. The breaching of the quality maxim is realized because Goldberg has no evidence of ridiculing the victim's personality. Thus, the metaphorical expression appears in this utterance as Stanley is compared to a plague. 'You're dead' is repeated three times. This is breaching for the quantity maxim giving tautology.

Extract Four
Stanley: I told you to get those bottles out.
Goldberg: Mr. Webber, sit down a minute.
Stanley: Let me—just make this clear. You don’t bother me…So why don't you just go, without any more fuss?
Goldberg: Mr. Webber, sit down.
Stanley: It’s no good starting any kind of trouble.
Goldberg: Sit down.
Stanley: Why should I?
Goldberg: If you want to know the truth, Webber, you're beginning to get on my breasts.
Stanley: Really? Well, that's—
Goldberg: Sit down.
Stanley: No. (p. 45).

Context: McCann enters the house holding bottles but Stanley disagrees to get them in and he told him to leave them out. Goldberg and McCann start to interrogate aggressively repeating the sentence 'sit down' four times which demonstrates the carelessness for what Stanley suffers from.

Pragmatic analysis: 'Sit down a minute' indicates an ignoring behavior for Stanley's utterance. The repetition of 'sit down' represents a direct commanding speech act. According to Searle & Vanderveken (1985, p. 201), this act has the characteristics of the directive force and authority performed over the hearer; it is mostly related to the institutional activity. It meets the following conditions: 1. Propositional condition: a future act is to be done which is beneficial for the speaker or hearer. 2. Preparatory condition: the speaker has the power over the hearer to ask him
do the act and the speaker believes that the hearer has the ability to do it. 3. Sincerity condition: the speaker wants the hearer to do the act. 4. Essential condition: counts as an attempt to get the hearer to do the act. Repeating the sentence 'sit down' is a negative affirming speech act that hints to aggressive insistence with the aim of annoying the hearer. These acts push Stanley to struggle with Goldberg and McCann. 'You're beginning to get on my breasts' is a threatening speech act by Goldberg. The bald-on-record impoliteness strategy is observed because the aggression is obvious when they continue dominating their power over him. The repetition of the same phrase 'sit down' breaches the quantity maxim.

**Extract Five**

Goldberg: Do you recognise an external force?
Stanley: What?
Goldberg: Do you recognise an external force?
McCann: That’s the question!
Goldberg: Do you recognise an external force, responsible for you, suffering for you?
Stanley: It's late.
Goldberg: Late! Late enough! When did you last pray?
McCann: He's sweating!
Goldberg: When did you last pray?
McCann: He's sweating! (p. 50).

**Context:** Goldberg and McCann use the recycling way in their interrogation with Stanley. This is the most common way of speaking with him throughout the whole play. They ask him about the prayer time and they accuse him of sweating. They destroy Stanley and finally make him collapse.

**Pragmatic analysis:** The threatening speech act is represented by 'do you recognize an external force?' with the negative affirming act because Goldberg repeats this sentence many times and he does not give Stanley a chance to speak. The context refers to the use of aggressiveness because of treating Stanley badly. The repetition of the questions in the conversation is one of the flouting of quantity maxims.

**Extract Six**

Goldberg: We'll make a man of you.
McCann: And a woman.
Goldberg: You'll be re-orientated.
McCann: You'll be rich.
Goldberg: You'll be adjusted.
McCann: You'll be our pride and joy.
[...]
Goldberg: A statesman.
McCann: You'll own yachts.
Goldberg: Animals.
McCann: Animals. [GOLDBERG looks at MCCANN.]
Goldberg: I said animals.
[...]

Arab World English Journal
ISSN: 2229-9327
Stanley: Uh-gug...uh-gug...eeehhh-gag...[On the breath.] Caahh...caahh... [They watch him. He draws a long breath which shudders down his body. He concentrates.]
Goldberg: Well, Stanny boy, what do you say, eh? [They watch. He concentrates. His head lowers, his chin draws into his chest, he crutches.](p. 92-93)

**Context:** This is the last conversation with Stanley. Goldberg and McCann use sarcastic language that affects Stanley negatively. He becomes unstable and cannot breathe. He cannot even say a clear word.

**Pragmatic Analysis:** The first turns of Goldberg and McCann illustrate the use of utterances like (be rich, our pride and joy, statesman and own yachts) that indicate unreal acts alleged to be done to Stanley. Besides, other utterances like (make you a man, woman, re-orientated, animals) show the aggressive treatment to Stanley. Here, the ridiculing speech act is found. The repetition of the use of the word 'animals' means issuing an affirming speech act, but it has a negative sense in that it annoys the hearer. The positive impoliteness strategy is realized by the use of 'animals' referring to Stanley as Goldberg and McCann use it. It is a word of calling names. The use of different forms of uninformative expressions indicates the flouting of quantity maxim which gives repetition.

**Statistical Analysis**
This section depends on the previous qualitative analysis of the data. Mainly, it concentrates on quantitative analysis to provide clear findings of the pragmatic study. It illustrates the most prevalent forms of aggression that are realized in the two plays. The results are presented below. Figure Two shows the non-verbal acts in the two plays. They are ignoring, shouting, yelling, and throwing things with the highest percentage to ignoring. This non-verbal act is painful if used between family members, or friends. It has the highest appearance, which indicates that it is effective in showing passive-aggressive feelings towards others.

![Figure 2. Non-verbal Acts in the Two Plays](image)

Figure Three represents the macro types of speech acts that are issued in the two plays with the highest percentage to expressive speech acts. Then, representatives, commissives, and directives come respectively. Since the expressive acts represent the aggressive behavior of the aggressor, it is natural to be the highest in appearance.
Figure 3. Macro Speech Acts in the Two Plays

Figure Four demonstrates the micro speech acts for the two plays. The higher one is a negative affirming speech act. They are arranged from highest to lowest as follows: belittling, threatening, ridiculing, insulting, commanding, promising, ordering, and accusing. The affirming speech act is aggressive if it is repeated again and again which shows disrespect and causes annoyance to the receiver. This is why it has been called as a negative speech act.

Figure 4. The Sub-types of Speech Acts in the Two Plays

Figure Five illustrates the figures of speech that are utilized in the two plays. They are respectively: repetition, metaphor, hyperbole, and simile. Repetition is annoying as well; it causes nervousness during personal conversations.

Figure 5. Figures of Speech in the Two Plays
Figure Six displays the four types of impoliteness strategies. The positive impoliteness strategy takes the highest percentage, whereas the negative, withholding, and bald-on-record impoliteness strategies are observed respectively. Positive impoliteness is the highest because normally human beings like to be respected and valued, especially in familial, or intimate relations.

![Figure 6. Impoliteness Strategies in the Two Plays](image)

Figure Seven reports the micro impoliteness strategies in the two plays. It is observed that some of them appear in the use of language. Calling name is the most prevalent one, then ridicule, taboo words, absent politeness expression, abusive language, swear, and direct impoliteness acts are realized respectively. It seems that calling others names is the easiest way of showing one’s aggression towards others.

![Figure 7. The Micro Impoliteness Strategies in the Two Plays](image)

**Discussion**

Based on what has been mentioned above, aggression characterizes the data under analysis in both verbal and non-verbal forms. It is manifested verbally via different pragmatic phenomena. Expressive speech acts are the highest in appearance. The affirming speech act which is used in a negative way imparting an annoying sense appears as the highest in percentage. Many figures of speech are used. The annoying repetitive pattern shows the highest percentage. Most of the impoliteness strategies are directed to threaten the positive face of the interlocutors. The aggression phenomenon is prevalent in interpersonal relations with a harmful effect on human beings and their relationships.
Conclusions

The concluding remarks this study reveals are presented as follows:

1. Aggression is caused by specific reasons like close-mindedness, misunderstanding, hostile or rude attitudes as well as the psychological state of the interlocutors.
2. Many pragmatic strategies are used to convey aggression. Speech acts and impoliteness are the most prevalent ones in the data under scrutiny.
3. The two plays show the highest frequency for the expressive speech act which is an indication of expressing the aggressive self of the speakers because aggression is an inner feeling and behavior that is expressed via language.
4. Aggressive people utilize different figures of speech to show their aggression in personal communication.
5. Impoliteness is an inherent feature in aggressive communications. The positive impoliteness strategy is the highest which means that people need harmonious interactions with others. They usually do not prefer clashing with their partners, or friends.
6. Aggressive styles may lead to unwanted consequences if they abound in personal communications.

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References


Exploring Students’ Perceptions and Attitudes towards Genre-based Pedagogy Developed in Persuasive Writing Teaching: The Systemic Functional Linguistics Perspective

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Received: 9/15/2021 Accepted: 10/4/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Previous studies in genre-based pedagogy mainly concerned with its teaching effects, few studies involved with students’ perceptions and attitudes which is actually playing a role in teaching and learning activities. The present study intends to make some explorations in this aspect. A quasi-experimental study to designed to answer the research question “What are students’ perceptions and attitudes towards the genre-based pedagogy developed in Chinese university students’ persuasive writings?” Thirty-four students participated in the study and a four-point Likert scale questionnaire and an interview were applied to collect the data. After the quantitative and qualitative analysis, the study find that most participants hold positive attitudes towards every item of the questionnaire and think highly of the genre-based teaching pedagogy from the following six aspects: the mastery of textual features, the genre-awareness of persuasion, confidence in writing an effective persuasion, attitudes towards group writing in the teaching instruction, interests in the application of the curriculum cycle to other genres and other program instruction related comments such as being difficult to master certain required language features and following the teaching patterns involved in the textual construction of persuasion. However, the general indication is that the curriculum cycle can help and enhance students’ understandings of each of the textual features of persuasion. Finally, the study provides implications for future teaching: the genre-based approach could be effectively and widely applied in Chinese university students’ genre writing as the apprenticeship involved allows the students to be more creative as their writing skills develop.

Keywords: attitudes, genre-based pedagogy, perceptions, persuasive writing, systemic functional linguistics

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.17
Introduction

In the EFL teaching and learning context, writing has always been a difficult area although both teachers and students devote extensive energy and time to it. It may very well be because writing involves many factors such as generation, analysis, ideas, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and mechanics etc., which makes writing a multidimensional complex process (William, 2007, p. 12). While it is essential for foreign language learners to develop their abilities to write as Raimes (1983) pointed out writing helped students learn. (p. 19). Researchers and teachers are always finding different approaches to writing and theories experience several stages of development. Generally speaking, there are three typical approaches: the product approach, the process approach and the genre-based approach. The product approach originated in the 1960s, emphasizing accuracy of form based on the idea that learning is the product of forming habits (Silva, 1990). Later in the 1970s, ESL writing moved from the traditional language-based approach to the process approach. The process approach focuses on the writer’s thoughts and the importance of repeated thinking, and pays less attention to readers (Silva, 1990). Then in the early 1980s, in order to bridge the gap between product and process writing approaches, the genre-based approach evolved as a development to these two approaches. The teaching principle of genre-based approach is to help students learn to understand generic texts, to recognize the generic patterns and related language features they encounter within texts (Price & Price, 2002). There are three broad and overlapping schools of genre theory: the New Rhetoric approach, the ESP approach and the Sydney School, the latter was based on the socially-based language studies of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The main target is to analyze the relationship between social contexts and linguistic aspects (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This school of genre theory was first proposed by Halliday (1978), later developed by Derewianka (1990), Foley (2011), Rothery (1989, 1996), Rose and Acevedo (2006), Rose and Martin (2012), etc. It is found the most appropriate and persuasive theory in analyzing lexico-grammatical features of genre writing. In particular classroom teaching, the genre-based approach is widely applied through “curriculum cycle”. It emphasizes the explicit instruction on controlling generic structural patterns and lexico-grammatical features of a particular genre, and collaborative writing. Based on these, the present study put forward the research question “What are students’ perceptions and attitudes towards the genre-based pedagogy developed in Chinese university students’ persuasive writing?” to explore students’ perceptions and attitudes towards this widely applied writing pedagogy in the EFL contexts and to provide implications for Chinese English writing teaching and assessing in China.

Literature Review

SFL is a theory of language centered around the notion of language functions. The SFL is the most fully elaborated and useful system for discourse analysis and various areas of applied linguistics. The genre-based approach informed by SFL was first developed in Australia and associated with the Sydney School Project. The project was conducted within Bernstein’s (1975) framework of deconstructions of traditional progressive pedagogy and detailing the pedagogy. Later, the project influenced other educational systems in Australia, and had been adopted in primary, secondary, tertiary, professional and community teaching contexts in programs for native speakers of English as well as ESL and EFL learners. Educators in countries as diverse as Singapore, South Africa, USA, Italy, Hong Kong, Australia, UK, China, Canada, Sweden,
Indonesia and Thailand were employing genre-based approaches in developing their syllabuses, materials and curriculum (Derewianka, 2003).

Currently, many studies on SFL-based genre approach have shown improvement in students’ genre writing ability. Some studies reported this approach resulted in the promotion of learners’ generic structural awareness. For example, Chen and Su (2012) and Feez (2002) reported that this approach was effective in learners’ summarization ability, especially their organization of narration text structure. Carstens (2009) investigated the effectiveness of using genre-based approach with SFL grammar as the theoretical framework for teaching academic writing to second-year undergraduate students of Humanities at the University of Pretoria and found a general improvement of writing ability. Although it was challenging for many tertiary-level learners to acquire specific knowledge and skills to write particular academic genre texts, genre-based writing had the capability to enhance their writing abilities. Some other studies on SFL genre-based teaching and learning found that learners improved their understanding of the logico-semantic relationship. For example, in Srinon’s (2011) study, learners’ use of resources to construct a logico-semantic relationship increased, that is, the frequency of using single-clause sentences reduced, and sentences including hypotaxis and parataxis increased. In addition, some studies indicated genre awareness improvement with the SFL-based instruction. Yasuda (2011) experimented the SFL genre approach on 70 Japanese undergraduates and confirmed that this approach enabled the students to improve their genre awareness and command of lexico-grammatical features. In recent three years, more studies were conducted to provide evidences for genre-based pedagogy. Nagao (2019) took the genre of discussion as an example to investigate the changes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners’ psychological attributes in relation to awareness of the lexico-grammatical features and generic structures. The study indicated specific improvements in genre-based writing, particularly among low proficiency English learners. Yi He (2021) took netvertisement writings as an example to explore the persuasive strategies in a Chinese college from the perspective of SFL approach and got positive results.

In specific classroom teaching, genre-based pedagogy takes different forms. Among them, curriculum cycle is one of the best-known approaches to writing, which scaffolds the process of developing different genres. In order to facilitate and conceptualize literacy learning in schools, many researchers (Cheng, 2005; Hyland, 2003) emphasized the importance of curriculum cycle, which included deconstruction, joint construction and independent construction as initiated by Rothery (1994). Educational linguists and researchers later adapted this cycle into several other versions for different purposes. For example, Derewianka (1990), Foley (2012) and Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks and Yallop (2001) adapted it into a four-stage model by adding the stage of context exploration. Some other researchers adapted the four-stage model into a five-stage model: Sharpe and Thompson (1998) stress more on developing the context and Derewianka and Jones (2016) divide context exploration into two specific stages.
Many studies reported the benefits of applying curriculum cycle to explore the degree to which genre-based teaching allows learners to gain genre awareness and improves writing quality when they write argumentative essays (Tsou & Lin, 2013). Syarifah and Gunawan (2015) observed improvement in six EFL learners’ writing performance of a discussion genre text. In particular, the social function, schematic structure, and language features improved because of the cycle model. Jamrassri (2018) experimented with 32 English Education students at Phranakhon Rajabhat University by using the curriculum cycle model to develop the students’ “exposition” genre. The study of Nagao (2018) indicated that applying the curriculum cycle and a genre-based approach to writing instruction had the potential to enhance EFL students’ awareness of generic structure. Yu Huang and Lawrence Zhang (2020) did an intervention study of process-genre approach in two English classes at a university in China and found significant increases in the intervention group’s writing performance and little improvement in the comparison group. Mirallas (2021) experimented the genre approach in the form of Reading to Learn Pedagogy to the teaching of Science Research Article writing to researchers in an EFL context and found it was effective. But there are also some studies which do not provide evidence for the teaching effects and genre awareness improvement. For example, Viriya and Wasanasomsithi (2017) applied the curriculum cycle to writing lessons for a 12-week period. The target for these learners was to produce a genre text that was informative and persuasive. However, there was little improvement in the perspectives of learners’ awareness of the reader-writer relationship and what they should write. Viriya and Wasanasomsithi (2017) concluded that because these learners’ discourse community was within the classroom, and they knew that their audience, i.e., the readers of the text, would simply be their teachers. Therefore, awareness of the reader-writer relationship did not improve significantly in the post-task.

To sum up, the previous studies experimented on different genres and reported the teaching effects of genre pedagogy in improving students’ genre writing ability from different perspectives. It can be concluded that the teaching effects of genre pedagogy has been discussed well in both theoretical and empirical fields. But total agreement has not been reached. Besides, few studies investigated students’ attitudes and perceptions towards the pedagogy while this investigation is actually essential to explore the teaching effects from the whole perspective. This is also the research gap of this study. The present study will firstly present the instruction model and its implementation process. After that, a questionnaire and an interview on students’ perceptions and attitudes towards the designed teaching model of curriculum cycle will be reported and analyzed in detail.

Methods
Participants
The present study takes the English majors in an ordinary Chinese university – Chongqing Technology and Business University (CTBU) as the research subjects. Convenience sampling method was used to choose the samples. Thirty-four second-year university students from a natural class taught by the researcher in the English department of CTBU were chosen as samples to take part in the study. They were assigned into six groups (with five or six students in each group) to engage in the various learning activities. The experimental teaching lasted for one semester, starting from September 2020 and ending in December 2020.
Research Instruments

The research design of the study is a mixed one by including both the quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative research instrument is the questionnaire and the qualitative instrument is the interview. The questionnaire is a four-point Likert scale to measure the participants’ opinions towards each item for the sake of avoiding students’ tendency of choosing the neutral choice of “3”. To be specific, 1 means strongly disagree, 2 means disagree, 3 means agree, 4 means strongly agree. In order to help the students to get a clear understanding of the questionnaire items, both the Chinese and English version of the questionnaire was provided to students to collect the data. The details of the questionnaire are shown in Appendix A: The Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire.

Then in order to provide extra and in-depth evidence for the questionnaire results, a semi-conducted interview was implemented to explore students’ other comments for the teaching program. The interviewees were randomly sampled from the participants to provide extra data and further evidence for the questionnaire findings. To get the reliability of the data, the interview was conducted in English.

Research Procedure

This study is an experimental study on genre-based pedagogy. Based on the previous studies, the present study adapted the cycle of Foley (2012) and Derewianka (2016), and designed a four-stage curriculum cycle consisting of context exploration, text deconstruction/modelling, guided practice and teacher-led construction, and independent group construction to do the experiment. In these stages, a variety of language activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing are involved to develop students’ knowledge in the field of persuasion as well as to enhance their comprehensive language skills and literacy skills. The details and language learning activities for each of those stages is explained in detail in the following section.

Stage One: Context Exploration

It contains two parts: building knowledge of the field and supported reading. In this stage, the teacher firstly introduces the topic and target genre. Then, the teacher prepares some language learning activities such as discussions, brainstorming, think-pair-share activities, hands-on activities such as problem-solving, research activities such as jigsaw tasks, guest speakers etc. to help students become familiar with the topic. Then for the supported reading, it is closely related to the field-building stage as it offers opportunities to expand students’ knowledge of the curriculum cycle topic by engaging students in the reading activities related to the target genre. Activities suitable for it vary from teacher-led reading, to shared reading, and then to guided, collaborative and independent reading following the general shift from teacher explicitly modelling aspects of the reading process to students’ independence.

Stage Two: Text Deconstruction

It is also called the explicit instruction. In this stage, the focus shifts from field to genre. The teacher introduces the model text types they are learning to use through the reading activities in metalanguage, including the social purpose and textual features of persuasion. To be specific, there are the generic text structure, the characteristic language features, especially lexico-
grammatical features, and the reasons for the choice of particular language forms from the perspective of three metafunctions of SFL. These textual features are picked up from the likely use of persuasion in daily life and in school settings, from both the spoken and written corpus of persuasion, and are established as a template for the participants to refer to while writing. To be particular, the generic structure adapted from Foley (2012) and the language features are based on experiential function, interpersonal function and textual function. Through this stage’s explicit instruction, the teacher explicitly and systematically shows students how the meanings in the text are shaped by the context in which they are used, how the meanings in the text are unified by textual structure, and how the meanings in the text are encoded in lexicogrammar.

**Stage Three: Guided Practice and Teacher-led Construction**

It is a critical stage for students to practice what they have learned in the second stage. In fact, it consists of two steps: guided practice and joint construction. The first one is the guided practice. In this process, the teacher provides similar reading passages in the handouts and guides the students to discuss and analyze the patterns and language features according to persuasion textual feature template they have used in the explicit instruction phase. The other step is the teacher-led construction. After students become familiar with and are quite clear about the persuasion textual features, the teacher and students jointly work together towards the targeted writing task with the teacher being the guide.

**Stage 4: Independent Group Construction**

In this stage, students take over responsibility for the creation of the text. They are assigned in groups in mixed language levels and work together to construct a text on a topic closely related to the field and genre but different from the joint construction writing task in Stage Three. In the process, they can discuss and negotiate to provide feedback to each other such as responding to the meanings of the text, or editing according to the textual feature template of persuasion. In their group construction, the teacher can provide explicit feedback to students on the preparation of their drafts and final texts.

The experimental teaching was carried out for one semester, consisting of 32 hours in 16 weeks. Three iterations of the above-mentioned curriculum cycle were repeated with different topics. At the end of teaching experiment, a questionnaire survey and an interview were conducted to explore students’ attitudes and perceptions towards the designed teaching pedagogy.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The data were collected from the questionnaire survey and interview conducted at the end of the experimental period. All the 34 participants in the study were required to finish the questionnaire. Their confidentiality was maintained and the participants were asked to cooperate willingly so that the researcher could obtain accurate and reliable data. Thirty-four questionnaires were gathered and collected in total. Then the percentages and numbers for each response of each questionnaire item were calculated and analyzed by computer programs. Then the interview data collected from random sampled participants were analyzed by content analysis to provide extra information.

**Findings**
The findings of the study included both the questionnaire and interview findings covering six aspects: (1) Students’ mastery of the textual feature of persuasion, including their self-evaluation on whether students can identify the generic structure and language features and on whether students can write persuasions according to the teacher’s instruction for questionnaire Items one to five. (2) Whether they have the awareness of genres by evaluating an effective persuasion for questionnaire item six. (3) Their confidence on writing an effective persuasion for questionnaire item seven. (4) Their attitudes towards group construction process for questionnaire items eight and nine. (5) Students’ interests and enjoyment for the application of the teaching model for questionnaire item ten. (6) Other comments for the teaching program from the interview.

**Mastery of Textual Features**

For the mastery of textual features, there are five items in the questionnaire, which can be subdivided into the following two aspects: Item one and two for their ability to identify and analyze the textual features, and Item three to five for their ability to write with the textual features.

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**Figure 1.** Self-evaluation on the ability to identify textual features

Figure one is for the first aspect “students’ self-evaluation on the ability of identifying the textual features of persuasion” and most of them had a positive comment. The first item “I can easily find the generic structures while reading the persuasive essays” is about their ability to identify the generic structure. Most students thought they could easily identify the generic structure of persuasion. Twenty-three students (67.6%) choose to agree with the statement and four of them (11.8%) choose to strongly agree. Only one student strongly disagreed and six students disagreed, with the two accounting for 20.5%. That is to say, about 80% of them thought they could easily point out the generic structure of persuasion now. The second item “I can point out the important language features such as general participants, types of verbs, evaluative words, auxiliary verbs, connective words etc. while reading the persuasion text types” is to test their self-evaluation on the ability to identify the language features of persuasion. Twenty-one students (61.8%) agreed with and five students (14.7%) strongly agreed with the item. Only eight students (23.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this item. Most of them (more than 75%) thought they could easily analyze the language features while reading persuasions.
For the second aspect, self-evaluation on whether students can write effective persuasions by following the textual features presented in the teaching instruction. Items three and five investigated this aspect of students’ ability: Item three is about the ability to plan the framework of persuasion; Item four is about the ability to use the textual features in persuasive writings; Item five is about the ability to revise the writing according to the textual features. Figure two shows that most of the responses for the three questions showed strong agreement. The means for each of the three items were quite high, and the students had strong agreements with these items. Specifically, for item three, “Before writing a persuasive essay, I can write the outlines/planning framework of the writing task”, only three students (8.8%) disagreed with this statement, 17 students (50%) agreed and 14 students (41.2%) strongly agreed with it. That is, more than 90% of the students thought they could write an effective planning framework, with the major points contained in persuasion. Then for item four “I can write a persuasive essay following the convention we talked about in classroom instruction”, only five students (14.7%) showed disagreement, no students showed strong disagreement, twenty-two students (64.70%) agreed that they could write the planning framework and seven students (20.60%) even showed strong agreement. Finally, for item five “I can revise the content, structure and language of my writing according to the checklist table for persuasive writing provided by my teacher”, more than 80% of the students (28 students) (82.3%) showed agreement and only six students (17.6%) thought they could not do that, no students expressed strong disagreements.

The Genre-Awareness of Persuasion

Figure 3. Self-evaluation on students’ genre-awareness
The second part of the questionnaire was actually to investigate students’ genre-awareness. Item six “This semester’s instructional model let me know what is an effective persuasive writing” was designed to survey this aspect. Figure three indicated that the mean of the item was very high, only one student showed disagreement, four students (11.8%) and 29 students (85.3%) showed agreement and strong agreement respectively.

**Confidence in writing an effective persuasion**

![Figure 4. Confidence in writing an effective persuasion](image)

Item seven “After this semester’s instruction, I have the confidence to write an effective persuasive writing.” investigated students’ confidence of writing an effective persuasion after the instruction. Figure four reveals that after the instruction, nearly 90% (30 students) of them were confident to write an effective persuasion. The mean for this item was also quite high. Only four students (11.80%) showed disagreement, the other 30 students showed agreement or strong agreement.

**Attitudes Towards Group Writing**

![Figure 5. Attitudes towards group writing](image)

Items eight and nine in the questionnaire were to investigate students’ attitudes towards the most important stage of the curriculum cycle “group writing”. As indicated in figure five, the means of these two items are 3.1 and 3.2 respectively (both above three), which means that from the total perspective, students showed positive attitudes towards group writing. For item eight “I like the group construction stage”, twenty-seven students (79.4%) expressed their enjoyment of group
writing, but some students did not like it, seven students showed either strong disagreement or disagreement, a percentage of 20.6%. For item nine “The group writing process has improved my writing ability”, the percentage of agreement was higher than item eight. Among them, twenty-nine students (85.3%) thought they could improve their writing ability in group writing process. Only five students showed disagreements. Generally, the above figure five suggested that although a few students showed their negative attitudes towards group writing, but still most students thought group writing could promote their writing ability and they liked the process of group cooperation in writing.

**Interests in Application of Curriculum Cycle**

![Chart](chart.png)

Figure 6. Interests in application of curriculum cycle to other genres

In order to have a further understanding of the students’ interests and enjoyments in the curriculum cycle applied in this teaching instruction, item ten “I enjoy learning different types of writings following the teaching pattern we adopt this semester” was to investigate it from another perspective. Figure six reveals that more than 80% of the participants (29 students) liked the teaching approach. Only five students (14.7%) showed their dislike for the teaching pattern, none showed strong dislike.

**Other Comments Related to the Teaching Program**

In order to explore students’ attitudes and perceptions towards the model, an interview on the designed question “Other comments you may have or want to add about the teaching program” was implemented after the questionnaire to investigate other comments of the participants and provide in-depth data. Nine students were interviewed to give comments about the teaching program. These comments focused on the implementation of curriculum cycle and group writing process.

First are some general comments and suggestions they gave for the implementation of curriculum cycle. Some students gave further specific comments, for example, Rino (a male participant) mentioned what he can learn from the teaching model “The teaching method was practical and interesting. I could learn a lot from the revision process and the teacher’s feedback…”. Then other participants gave comments from other aspects and teaching suggestions, mentioning “needing more model exercises and more detailed analysis of each paragraph of the essay”, “being practical, but still being difficult to control the use of some language features in writing”, “hoping to practice collecting ideas related to a topic for not having many useful ideas to illustrate an argument for an effective persuasion” and “give us more reference materials to accumulate.”
In addition, there are also some other comments about the group writing process, some were positive, such as Ava (a female participant) mentioning “In the group writing, we can learn many writing techniques and it is a good way to learn.” But some participants hold negative attitudes towards group writing as they mentioned “to reduce the frequency of group writing and increase individual writing”, “the unreasonable arrangements of the group members”, “the unwillingness to cooperate with some students in the groups” and “reducing and disliking group writing”.

**Discussions**

**Students Have High Self-Evaluation on Mastery of Textual Features After Instruction.**

The results of the above figure one and two indicated that most students (more than 3/4) could identify and analyze the textual features of persuasion including the generic structure and language features. Besides, most students (about 80%) thought they had the ability to write an effective persuasion according to the teaching program. They agreed with the point that the teaching program was quite useful and helpful for their writing of persuasion. They thought they had mastered the important textual features of persuasion. The typical feature of curriculum cycle is explicit instruction and this “visible pedagogy” can make what is to be learned and assessed clear to students. This finding is corresponding with most the current genre-based studies (Yasuda, 2011; Nagao, 2018; Jamrassri, 2018) as supporters of genre-based pedagogy suggest that students learn best when explicit instruction of genre knowledge is given to students, as explicit understanding of the types of texts can allow students to read and write better. Through this explicit instruction, the language and structural features in different types of texts are also presented to students explicitly, which allows them to improve their own writing as they have been “empowered” (Lee & Wong, 2013).

**Students Have High Self-Evaluation on Genre Awareness Development.**

The above figure three indicated that nearly all students, except one, strongly agreed with the item about their genre awareness self-evaluation and thought they could evaluate persuasions and had formed the awareness. After the instruction, they learned to evaluate persuasion in the perspective of genre features, which means that they know what kind of persuasion was effective, what features the genre of persuasion should have. This is corresponding with the research results of Nagao (2018, 2019), students improved their awareness of generic structure and lexicogrammatical features. Students in this study improved their genre awareness from both perspectives of generic structure and language features. Through repeated practice of commenting and analyzing other writings, students can master the basic features of a particular genre and this genre awareness can then contribute to developing students’ writing ability.

**Students Have Strong Confidence to Write Standardized Persuasions.**

Confidence is another important factor in developing one’s ability. It gives people greater self-worth, thus making them feel more valuable. Besides, it can encourage one to recognize and appreciate one’s talents and skills. In writing, if one is confident about their writing ability, they will write fast and more logically, therefore, the writing quality will be much higher than those written by students with low-level self-confidence. After the instruction, about 90% of the participants have strong confidence to write effective persuasion and this confidence helps them develop their genre writing ability.
Students Think Highly of Group Collaborative Writing.

Attitudes are the individual’s positive or negative evaluation of performing the particular behavior of interest (Ajzen, 1988). In the language teaching and learning fields, attitude is an important factor to reflect the efficiency of the teaching instruction. If students hold positive attitudes towards the teaching model, they will follow it and learn from it greatly. On the contrary, the teaching effects will be less effective. The results of figure four revealed that most students held positive attitudes towards group writing and thought it could improve their writing ability. With positive attitudes, students will work positively and collaborate with each other well in writing practice. Nystrand (1989, p70) pointed out that writing actually involved more than the generation, organization, and translation of ideas into text. Instead, each act in the writing process was an episode of interaction. Writing in nature is a process of interaction, but the patterns in collaborative writing students were engaged in were generally reported to have four patterns just as Storch (2002a) indicated: collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice. Among them, the most efficient one was the collaborative pattern and should be encouraged to make everyone have the equal opportunity to share and learn in group work. But the deterministic factor of efficient pattern of interaction relies on the distribution of group members which involves many factors except language levels. This implicates that researchers need to put more factors into consideration in research design process.

In addition, through collaborative writing, the writing efficiency can be promoted because students are impelled to make decisions about the language that they need to express ideas, and thus have to formulate the structure quickly in the process of producing a text together (Suzuki, 2008). They can make use of every group member’s strengths, for example some being good at grammar, some being good at collecting ideas, some being good at revising, some being good at word choice etc.. Besides, not only higher-level students provide scaffolding for lower-level students, but also every group member’s strength can be the scaffolding for those who lack or are poor at the points. But one point should be noted, appropriate collaborative interaction pattern should be encouraged to and thus, through collaborative group writing, students can learn writing well. In addition,

Students Show Interests in Applying the Cycle Teaching Model to Learning Other Genres.

The significance of the designed teaching model in this experimental study is not only to the writing practice for the genre of persuasion, but also help students to learn the writing of other genres. Students’ interests to apply this teaching model to other genre writing is a reflection of the efficacy of the teaching model. The above research findings reveal that generally, most of the participants gave positive comments on the cycle model and thought it was feasible to apply it to learning other genres. This indicates that the present designed curriculum cycle is an effective genre writing teaching and learning model, and that the model can be applied to learning other text types. In EFL writing fields, many researchers have successfully applied this pedagogical modal to learning other types of text, such as summary writing of Yasuda (2015), argumentative essays of Tsou and Lin (2013) and Huangyu and Lawrence Zhang (2020), academic writing of Emilia (2011), and netvertisement writings of Yi He (2021). But it should be noted that there was a minority of the students who did not like learning with genre writing model for what seem to be personal reasons such as: not liking the group they were working with or preferring to engage in writing in a more individual manner as indicated below.
Students Have More to Say About the Teaching Program

The comments given in the interview indicate that many of them gave positive comments for the cycle in general, but their comments also showed that they still had some problems in some stages of the cycle. For example, in context exploration stage, especially for some topics they were not familiar with, they did not have enough background knowledge, relevant vocabulary and ideas to illustrate the arguments. In the future teaching, teaching activities in this stage can be added more, especially more background materials can be provided for students to accumulate. Another problem occurred in the context deconstruction stage. Although in each curriculum cycle, some model texts were analyzed, some students still had problems in analyzing the specific features of persuasion, and they needed more practices to reinforce the standards of an effective persuasion. Besides, the interview data reveal that more factors such as the intimate relationship among group members, personality and personal interests should be considered for group collaborative writing, especially in the assignments of group members. The iterations of curriculum cycle can be adjusted according to their progress in writing and particular situations.

Conclusion

The present study adopted a mixed research method by applying the quantitative instrument of questionnaire and the qualitative instrument of interview to investigate students’ perceptions and attitudes towards the designed SFL-based genre pedagogy. The results of the questionnaire survey indicate that nearly 80% of the participants hold positive attitudes towards items indicated in the questionnaire. Most of them think highly of the genre-based teaching pedagogy: they mastered the generic structure and language features for the genre and could write an effective persuasion according to the procedure given in the teaching pedagogy, in terms of both group and individual writing. Some students still had problems, more often in terms of their personalities rather than mastery of the language features, textual organization, and building enough confidence to write effectively. However, such scaffolding in groups together with the teacher over the semester indicated that this genre-based pedagogy has the potential to improve writing. And the interview data generally confirmed with the questionnaire data, but it indicated more, especially in the implementation of particular stages of curriculum cycle, the interactive pattern of group work and the assignments of group members.

Acknowledgements

The author extends her appreciation to the deputyship for Chongqing Technology and Business University, and Chongqing Federation of Social Sciences in China for funding this research work through the two projects numbers (1951035 and 2019PY25 respectively).

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References


Appendix A: The Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire
Directions: Dear Sir/ Miss, this questionnaire is designed to investigate your perception of the teaching instruction on persuasive writing. Please tick your choice under the corresponding number, 1 means strongly disagree, 2 means disagree, 3 means agree, 4 means strongly agree. The questionnaire is just for academic study use, the responses will not affect your scores in the course and all of your responses will be keep in secret, please make the choices according to your real learning situations.

同学你好：本问卷旨在调查大家对本学期论说文教学模式的看法和理解。请在相应的选项后打勾，1代表非常不赞同，2代表不赞同，3代表赞同，4代表非常赞同。本问卷仅用于学术研究，你的答案不会影响你课程的分数，你所有的答案也将被保密，请根据自己的真实情况作答，谢谢支持与配合！

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can easily find the generic structures while reading the persuasive essays. 在阅读论说文时我能很快地找出论说文的通行结构。</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>I can point out the important language features such as general participants, types of verbs, evaluative words, auxiliary verbs, connective words etc. while reading the persuasion text types. 在阅读论说文时我能找出论说文重要的语言特征，如表泛指的主语,动词的种类,评价性或者情感表达词,情态助动词,要用的连接词等。</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Before writing a persuasive essay, I can write the outlines/planning framework of the writing task. 在写论说文前,我可以写出该写作任务的计划框架。</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I can write a persuasive essay following the convention we talked about in classroom instruction. 我可以根据这学期在课堂上讲的论说文结构和语言要求写出一篇论说文。</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I can revise the content, structure, and language of my writing according to the checklist table for persuasive writing provided by my teacher. 我可以根据老师提供的论说文修改对照表修改文章的内容,结构和语言特征等。</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>This semester’s instructional model let me know what is a good persuasive writing. 这学期的教学让我懂得了什么的文章是一篇好的论说文。</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>After this semester’s instruction, I have the confidence to write an effective persuasive writing. 这学期的教学让我有了信心写出一篇好的论说文。</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I like the group construction stage. 我喜欢小组合作写作的过程。</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The group writing process has improved my writing ability. 小组合作写作可以提高我的写作水平。</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>I enjoy learning different types of writings following the teaching pattern we adopt this semester. 我喜欢按照这种教学模式学习写作其他文体的写作。</td>
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Going beyond the Text: Interactional Competence in Reading Comprehension Class

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Received: 7/24/2021 Accepted: 11/4/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Drawing on the principles underlying conversation analysis (CA), this paper is a single case analysis of interaction in an English as a foreign language (EFL) reading comprehension classroom in Saudi Arabia. It looks at learning from a sociocultural perspective and uses constructs from this theoretical perspective. It focuses on Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) (Walsh, 2013), showing classroom interaction features that are considered CIC. The paper reflects how an understanding of the concept can lead to more dialogic, engaged learning environments. The paper also connects CIC to teachers' ability to manipulate simple classroom interactional resources to make the teaching process more effective. The paper demonstrates how teachers can induce CIC by utilizing interactional techniques, such as relaxing the mechanism and speed through which turns are taken or given, use of active listenership devices, extending wait time, and use of open-ended questions to expand topics under development. The paper argues that those techniques will help teachers, as evidenced from the cited examples, further enhance classroom participation so that it is convergent with their pedagogical goals. Finally, the paper has pedagogical implementations as it sheds light on techniques that help promote classroom interaction as an indication of learning among students with limited linguistic resources.

Keywords: conversation analysis, classroom interactional competence, EFL, higher education, reading comprehension

Cite as: Jawhar, S., Alhawsawi, S., & Walsh, S. (2021). Going beyond the Text: Interactional Competence in Reading Comprehension Class. Arab World English Journal, 12 (4) 259-278. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.18
Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed considerable growth in the literature on the importance of the social aspect of second language acquisition (SLA). At the same time, there has been a remarkable increase in polarisation among scientists. SLA researchers have been divided over the usefulness of conversation analysis (CA) as a methodology for studying SLA. Nevertheless, CA has gained a foothold in the field of SLA (Ortega, 2005) because of the perceived value it adds because it looks at learning via a social lens (Zuengler & Miller, 2006) as well as looking at the micro details of the interactional organization.

On the other hand, SLA theories traditionally and due to their focus on the process whereby second language (L2) is learned have had an inherited cognitive orientation leading mainstream SLA researchers, such as Long (2006) and Gregg (2005), to consider SLA as a psycholinguistic process. However, inspired by Firth and Wagner’s (1997) proposal, several researchers have challenged this orientation. The publication of Firth and Wagner’s (1997) paper, which calls for a revision of the framework within which SLA is viewed, has led to a proliferation of studies that use CA within the field of SLA (Gardner & Wagner, 2004; Richards & Seedhouse, 2005; Kasper & Wagner, 2011). In their 1997 (and a more recent version of the paper, 2007), Firth and Wagner emphasized the importance of the social and cultural aspects of L2 learning.

The following decades have witnessed a paradigm shift in the way mainstream SLA scholars view SLA. This paradigm shift is represented by several studies that emphasize the social and cultural aspects of SLA manifested in its use outside the classroom setting. Studies such as Kurhile (2006), Seedhouse (2004), and Nguyen (2011b), for example, brought to light the essential role of language use through talk-in-interaction in the process of L2 acquisition. And, subsequently, with the focus placed on spoken interaction came the questions about the nature of interactional competence and how it should be assessed in the classroom setting (Galaczi & Taylor, 2018).

Interactional competence is one of the many aspects of SLA, in which conversation analysis (CA) has emerged as a powerful instrument and a well-established method of investigation. However, conversation analysts distinguish between IC as a constructed social activity and competence as cognitive knowledge that native speakers possess about their language, as defined by Chomsky (1965). CA, they have argued, is not a theory of language learning; thus, it cannot reflect what is occurring inside the interactants' minds (He, 2004).

Classroom interactional competence (CIC) is one of the many facets of IC. It is a term coined to define the “teachers’ and learners’ ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning” (Walsh, 2013, p.124). Though CIC takes different shapes and has different characteristics depending on the context, some features are common to all contexts. Nevertheless, teachers' CIC manifests itself in the shape of successful use of language that leads to the creation of better opportunities for learners to interact and display understanding in the classroom context. In other words, the teachers can make interactional decisions that serve their pedagogical goals and, at the same time, create 'space for learning' (Walsh & Li, 2013). A more detailed discussion of CIC is presented in the next section.
Galaczi & Taylor (2018) noted a mismatch between the importance of interactional competence in SLA and the number of studies examining it in different instructional contexts. Their paper is a comprehensive review of the history of the term from a theoretical and empirical perspective.

This paper is an addition to the work that looks at CIC. It examines the EFL context through a sociocultural lens and demonstrates how CA can be used as a tool to illustrate the micro-organizational structure of conversation as an exceptional resource for second language pedagogy. It shows the micro details of the interactional practices that are deployed by teachers and students. It also demonstrates the different resources used by teachers to induce (CIC) and by students to display their knowledge of these resources. Learning, in this paper, is viewed as a social action that can be manifested and oriented towards. It is also assumed that learning is shaped or influenced by the extent of engagement of the students and their involvement in talk-in-interaction (Walsh, 2012).

**Interactional competence Vs. classroom interactional competence**

The literature shows that many studies have looked at the role of interaction in shaping learning in the second language classroom (Markee, 2015; Seedhouse & Walsh, 2010; Sert, 2015; Walsh, 2012, 2013; Waring, 2019). Interactional competence (IC) is among several classroom aspects that have generated increased interest from researchers in SLA during the past three decades. It also gained some momentum following the work of Kramsch (1986). For instance, Young’s (1999) study, in which he proposed that IC is co-constructed and requires specific interactional events, is one of the best studies examining the construct of IC in SLA classrooms.

The use of CA to study interactional competence in different contexts has emphasized the uniqueness of each interactional context. It has also highlighted the importance of obtaining the required knowledge of the specifics of the interactional competence related to that context. This context-specific interactional competence knowledge might include anything from a new native speaker (L1) pharmacy intern learning how to interact with patients to L1 high school students learning new interactional competencies to interact with teachers, administrators, and higher authorities (Nguyen, 2011a). The literature has shown that IC can be understood as an umbrella under which different practices are included. It has also demonstrated the fluid nature of IC that changes and develops every time the learner is engaged in a conversation with an interactant who is more experienced (Kim, 2017; Pekarek Doehler & Berger, 2016; Pekarek Doehler, Wagner, & Gonzalez-Martinez, 2018; Sert & Balaman, 2018).

Nevertheless, to understand the construct of IC more accurately, one should realize that people vary in their ability to communicate their ideas and make themselves understood. These differences are witnessed and reported in institutional settings and mundane conversations. However, when investigating an institutional setting, such as a classroom, the argument becomes more about the context-specific CIC than the general umbrella of IC. For instance, in the classroom setting, CIC is manifested in different patterns of interactions between the teachers and the learners and among the learners themselves. Some teachers, for instance, are more capable of engaging their learners in long and more meaningful interactional episodes than others. These teachers use different techniques and strategies to create “interactional space” (Walsh, 2006) for the learners and consequently increase their learning opportunities.
Researchers agree on the role of teachers in helping their students utilize interactional resources, such as L1, to communicate in L2 while achieving their pedagogical goals. Students’ orientation to co-construct meanings with the other interlocutor is usually witnessed through their efforts to display understanding and keep up with the interaction flow regardless of the adopted interactional resources.

Hall (1999) emphasized the importance of engaging in a conversation with an expert to learn interactional practices and asserted that this engagement provides guidance for the novice learner. In a classroom setting, the teachers play the role of the expert from whom they get guidance concerning interactional practices. Young (1999), one of the researchers who discussed IC in a classroom context, argued for the importance of the interactants’ engagement in meaning construction. He stated that L2 knowledge is co-constructed and that IC is not a mental property in the learner’s mind. In fact, he confirmed that IC is the product of the interactive process of talk-in-interaction.

Similarly, Walsh (2013) places interaction at the heart of learning, adding that CIC is mainly about how the interactants in the classroom manage the communication. To him, a teacher who demonstrates CIC uses the language in a way that is both convergent to his pedagogic agenda and, at the same time, is appropriate to the learners. Based on this argument, any evidence for CIC should reflect the relationship between the pedagogical agenda and the language used to implement it. In their discussion of CIC features, Moorhouse et al. (2021) added that it creates "space for learning." They argued that the space for learning could be created by "increasing wait-time, promoting extended learner turns and allowing planning time. By affording learners space, they are better able to contribute to the process of co-constructing meanings" (Moorhouse et al., 2021, p.3). It also, they added, helps in shaping the learners' contribution and helping them to express themselves.

This paper is in line with the previously mentioned work that associates classroom interactional competence with engagement. It argues for the teachers’ ability to induce better interactional competence if, and only if, they deliberately use interactional techniques that encourage their students to engage in extended conversations that lead to the achievement of the teacher’s pedagogical agenda. Teachers, we argue, can play a vital role in providing their students with opportunities through which they can co-construct and negotiate meaning. They can do this by building on their students’ L1 interactional competencies. They can also overtly expose the students to various L2 interactional techniques appropriate to the specific context in which they are involved. As Nguyen (2011b) stated, “participation itself is the target of learning: A second language learner needs to develop the specific interactional resources to participate in conversation with the target language” (Nguyen, 2011b, p. 38).

Data and Methodology

Participants

The data was collected in the year 2010 from a language institute in Saudi Arabia. The students were all native speakers of Arabic, as was the teacher. The students were studying English as part of their foundation program, after which they would attend university and choose their specialties based on their GPAs. The participants were 26 learners whose ages ranged...
between 19 and 21. The students’ level of proficiency is characterized as lower intermediate, and they are grouped based on the result of their placement test.

**Procedure**

While the data is part of a bigger corpus of 30 hours of EFL teaching, the segment used for this paper is a teaching session of 120 minutes that stood out during the transcription process as a unique example of CIC. Of those 120 minutes of interaction, the focus was only on the phase during which the teacher shifted the focus from book-based activities to the general discussion of a topic related to the students' reading. During this phase of the lesson, the teacher asked the students to display an understanding of what they had learned from the text. The students were expected to use as much vocabulary as possible from that which they had just been taught. The teacher’s initial question was about the students' opinion regarding the current lifestyle of young people and how this differs from the lifestyle of previous generations. The question was asked to test the students' ability to use the newly introduced vocabulary in an unfamiliar context, going beyond the text in the book (Appendix A). Typically, the teacher assesses the appropriacy of the provided answer in relation to the ongoing activity.

**Data Analysis**

The data were transcribed using conventions adapted from Paul ten Have (2007). A turn-by-turn analysis was conducted to allocate the different interactional techniques used by the teacher and students. It is essential to mention that the data is a single case that the researchers believe is an excellent example of CIC in EFL classrooms.

**Results**

In this section, we will present different excerpts taken from a reading comprehension classroom. However, the focus is mainly on the section of the lesson during which the teacher shifted the focus from the reading material to questions related to the students’ real lives in order to assess their comprehension of the passage as well as their ability to use the vocabulary they had just learned in a new and unfamiliar context (See section 3.2).

Before the extract, the teacher introduced a reading passage about the change in the dynamics of lifestyles in the USA over the past three decades. Following this, she started to ask questions related to the students’ own experiences. This sequence is used as a topic initiation technique (Schegloff & Sack, 1973) to get the students engaged and mark the new phase of the lesson.

**Excerpt (1)**

1. T: okay shall we start first of all in your opinion how is the lifestyle of young people today (0.2) in your culture, it is different from their parents and grandparents anybody?

2. 3. 4. (1.1)

5. S2: ((raise hand))

6. 7. T: ((looks at S1)) yes how is it different

8. 9. S1: we use technology more than they used to do

10. 11. T: okay so um (0.3) so you mean they used to use technology but less than you do 0.2 now

12. 13. 14. yes

15. 16. T: ((laughter)) okay excellent our friend is talking about technology as one of the main differences ((looking at S2)) I am coming to you (1.1)
In this excerpt, the teacher asks the students an open-ended question about their opinion regarding the current lifestyles of young people and how this differs from the lifestyles of previous generations (lines 1-3). The teacher follows this with a relatively long pause (1.1) to give the students sufficient time to think about answers and establish a connection between what they have read in the book and their real lives, i.e., her pedagogical objective. Although the teacher directs her question to the entire class, S2 shows an orientation to answer by raising her hand to attract the teacher's attention. However, the teacher moves towards S1 and establishes a mutual gaze, followed by a short response token “yes” to locate the next speaker, and repeats part of her question as a reminder to the student. S1 takes the floor and produces a multi-unit turn using comparison devices to display knowledge of the purpose of the question, which is a comparison of her generation and the previous one.

The teacher uses “okay” to acknowledge the student’s answer and follows that by a word search device “um” followed by a micro pause (0.3). This indicates that the teacher hesitates regarding whether to accept or reject the answer. She follows this by a confirmation request using the phrase “do you mean X” (Mackey & Goo, 2013). This kind of phrase is usually used in the second pair, yet the teacher uses it in the third part of the triadic IRE sequence. By so doing, the teacher is giving the student enough room to confirm and, possibly, to produce a further explanation of her answer. However, the student perceives the confirmation request as a yes/no question and offers a single-unit turn using “yes” as an answer (line 10).

The teacher follows with laughter to ease any tension that might have resulted from the delay of the evaluation part of the initial sequence or from the student’s indication of minimal involvement (Nesi, 2012). She follows the evaluation “excellent” by a reformulation of part of the student’s answer. She announces the closure of the sequence by looking at S2, who has also shown an orientation towards participation.

In this excerpt, we notice the teacher’s use of several interactional techniques, such as extending the wait time to allow the student to rehearse the answer, paraphrasing the student’s response, and then prefacing it with the phrase “do you mean X” in order to request confirmation. Though simple IC techniques, they result in the next students showing a willingness to participate, as can be seen in the following excerpt. In excerpt (2), the teacher approaches S2, who shows orientation towards participation and uses a short response “yes” to choose the next speaker.

**Excerpt (2)**

| 14 |  \[1.1\]   |
| 15 |   (look at S2) yes |
| 16 |   also they are more dependent than us=
| 17 |   yes |
| 18 |   they learnt how to deal with problems no one has to tell them |
| 19 |   if it’s right or wrong and they tried themselves not like no uh: |
| 20 |   their children not to be in their shoe |
| 21 |   oh, wow that is quite surprising because I thought its the opposite |
| 22 |   |
| 23 |   S3:  ([raise hand]) |
| 24 |   T:  ([point at S3]) |
| 25 |   S7:  ([I did not hear her]) |
| 26 |   S8:  ([inaudible])= |
| 27 |   T:  “yekhahib kum” (tr. shame on you) ([laugh]) |
| 28 |   S8:  ([laughter]) |
| 29 |   T:  okay, can you say that again please in a loud voice because it is great, ([looking at S3]) yeah |

Arab World English Journal  
ISSN: 2229-9327
Following the closure of the sequence with S1 (excerpt 1), the teacher also establishes a mutual gaze with S2, who shows orientation towards participation. In addition, she gives S2 some time to rehearse her answer (line 14) (Walsh, 2012) while she moves towards her. As in the previous excerpt, the teacher, who is mainly responsible for managing the turns by allocating who speaks next, tends to give the floor only to those students who show an orientation towards participation (Reddington, 2018).

S2 (line 16) builds on her friend’s answer using the conjunction “also.” S2 also shows an understanding of the teacher's request for comparison by using a comparative form. The student marks her TRP (Transition Relevance Place: the point in any interaction where there is the potential for another speaker to take a turn at the talk) through the use of a descending tone. However, the teacher latches onto S2 contribution using a short response token “yeah” to reflect percipience and active listenership (McCarthy, 2003).

The student perceives the teacher’s use of the short response token as a request to extend her explanation. This is shown in the next turn, in which the student produces a multi-unit turn involving an unprompted explanation. We also notice the student’s orientation to linguistic accuracy, as she abandons part of her turn and uses a new one to make herself more understandable “not like no uh::” The teacher (lines 21-22) expresses her surprise using the newsmaker device “oh,” following it with a justification of why she was surprised “because I thought it was the opposite.”

Because the teacher seems to have established a systematic way of managing the turns, i.e., trajectory, that includes the students who show orientation towards participation followed by her allocation of the turn, she mistakenly allocates the turn to S3, expecting an addition to the ongoing discussion.

However, to the teacher’s surprise, an unidentified student expresses difficulty in hearing the ongoing talk. The teacher (line 27) overtly displays her confusion as to why S3 raises her hand in the absence of a response, but she also uses the incident to introduce playfulness and create a sense of fun by using her L1 followed by laughter (Jawhar, 2018). In line (28), the class reciprocates by laughing out loud.

Following this, the teacher retakes control of the turn using the discourse marker “okay” to mark the end of the playfulness and asks S2 to repeat her answer, adding a justification of why she should do so: “because it is great.” The teacher’s praise of S2’s answer encourages the student to produce a more complex and carefully designed turn in which fewer grammatical mistakes occur. This excerpt shows us how the teacher’s use of active listenership device and display of complete engagement in the conversation resulted in a more complex turn and display of more sophisticated interactional competence. We also notice quite a fast-paced interaction with a couple of incidents where latching takes place.

In the next segment of the episode, excerpts (3), S2 responds to the teachers’ request to repeat her answer (excerpt 2). However, S2 pauses after the first part of her participation, but is encouraged by the teacher, who again uses a short response token “aha” to indicate understanding and a desire for the student to continue. Finally, the teacher rewards S2 by
recasting her answer and using it as an initiator of a new subtopic. She asks the students if they agree with S2’s proposition.

Excerpt (3)

31 T: aha
32 S2: ([laughter]) and they tried their best for us ([smiling voice])
33 T: Ok ([looking at the class]), do you agree with her?
34 S4: “ana semel it [bas] (tr. I heard but)
35 T: [kind] of, okay, "ele semel teeh" (tr. whatever you heard) okay I am coming to you okay, ([getting closer to S4])
36 S4: what do you think the_ ([pointing at herself in an exclamation way])

The teacher builds on S2’s answer in this excerpt and uses it as a topic for the newly initiated sequence (line 38). S4 displays what is understood by the teacher as an orientation towards participation. The teacher establishes mutual gaze (Goodwin, 1980) and allocates the turn using "yeah" in a single unit turn after stepping closer to S4. S4 is not ready to take the turn; therefore, she starts her turn with an L1 justification for her lack of participation. She expresses trouble in the communication and tells the teacher that she did not hear what was said earlier.

Nevertheless, the teacher does not allow her to avoid her turn and insists on receiving an answer, even though S4 did not hear the entire conversation. This excerpt is yet another example of the teacher’s use of a short response token as an acknowledgment of the student’s extended participation. It also shows the effects of the deployment of the short response directly after the student’s second turn response (i.e., a possible TRP) (Ford & Thompson, 1996). In addition, since the teacher does not deploy the token as a ‘stand-alone’ but provides more talk, she takes over speakership and does not display passive recipiency in the sense that she passes up an opportunity to take a fuller turn (Gardner, 2001; Jefferson, 1984)

In excerpt (4), the teacher gives the floor to S4 using the short response “yeah” as a freestanding device in an invitation for her to participate.

Excerpt (4)

45 T: yeah
46 S4: I do not know ” ma ahle loo sah” (tr. I do not feel it is right)
47 T: okay, but you have to tell me why do you think it is not [correct
48 S4: ([shouting])
49 S4: there is a difference in the characters and the customs
50 T: nowadays they are more focused about the costumes about_ 51 or life but in the past they were not like this
52 T: aha
53 S4: our parents used to go in the streets play with the boy
54 S4: ([laughter])
55 T: ([laughter]), this is the most important thing ([smiling
56 voice]) they used to play with boys
57 S4: ([laughter])
58 S4: ([inaudible])
59 S4: no no
60 T: okay
61 S5: “yaeni kan hayatulhum baseta mare “ (tr. meaning their life
62 was very simple) ([smiling voice])
63 T: okay ([smiling voice]) okay, anybody somebody else somebody else said that they disagree
64 S6: ([fraseed hand]) sorry
65 T: ([look at S6]) sorry
66 S6: “tash galat SS” (tr. what did SS said)
67 T: “yekhablik ethan betcheh rasikala al asas” (tr. shame on you,
68 then based on what you were nodding your head” ([smiling
69 voice])
70 S6: “ashan ana mo gadrah asma’a “ (tr. because I cannot hear)
71 T: “tab” (tr. okay) okay somebody else who has heard SS and
72 wants to comment
73 T: ([0.3]
S4 does not seem to be ready for the turn to be allocated to her; thus, she displays a claim of insufficient knowledge (Sert & Walsh, 2013) by using the phrase “I don’t know” followed by a justification in a smiling voice using her L1 “I don’t feel it is right” (line 46). The teacher uses the short response device “okay” to display acknowledgment, but follows the acknowledgment with a request for a further explanation using L2, “but you have to tell me why you think it is not correct.” The student overlaps with the teacher’s TRP using a prolonged explicit word-search device “uh:::::” (Brouwer, 2003). S5 takes an unsolicited turn and offers an answer that is perceived as funny by the teacher and some other classmates, such as S4 and another unidentified student.

S5 touches upon the socially sensitive topic of mixing between the genders. However, the rest of the class refrains from participating in the laughter until they receive a signal from the teacher, who laughs and treats the suggested subtopic as a source of amusement (lines 57-58). S4 realizes the sensitivity of the topic and overlaps with the teacher in an attempt to take the floor. She only manages to take the floor when the teacher gives it up and uses the discourse marker “okay” in what is understood as an allocation of the turn. S5 takes the floor (line 63-64) and explains her previous answer, but uses L1.

The teacher displays understanding of the problem but, at the same time, shifts the topic by looking for someone else with an opposing idea: “somebody uh:: said they disagree.” Another conversational difficulty occurs when S6 raises her hand in a move that the teacher understands as an orientation towards participation when, in fact, it is nothing but a way of expressing difficulty hearing. Once again, the teacher treats the communication breakdown as a source of playfulness and uses the L1 to create laughter. S6 understands the teacher’s disappointment and offers a justification for why she did not meet the teacher’s expectations, and produces an answer (line 73). Following this, the teacher expresses understanding and invites participation, but only from those who have heard the entire conversation.

This excerpt is an example of how the teacher deals with trouble in communication by using L1 as a source of humor, and accepting the student’s participation, using L1, for the sake of prolonging the exchange. A further example is her use of open-end questions to elicit more contributions.

Excerpt (4) is a clear example of how the teacher managed to encourage the students to engage in the ongoing topic by using interactional resources such as acknowledgment, active listenership devices and request for an explanation. Excerpt (5) is a continuation of (4).
Following a micro pause by the teacher (0.2), S7 shows an orientation to answer, but this time, the teacher wants to avoid misunderstandings or communication difficulties. The teacher establishes intersubjectivity by asking the student whether she is raising her hand to offer an answer or for other reasons. S7 confirms her desire to participate using a short response token “yes” in the second position of a question/answer adjacency pair. The teacher approves the participation and gives the student the floor. The student starts her multi-unit turn with the expression “I think” to indicate having lesser epistemic access to the topic, as well as her evaluation of a former proposition (Heinemann, 2008). The teacher latches onto the student using an active listenership device, “aha,” to encourage her to continue producing more talk. The student (line 89) maintains the floor longer by using a justifying subordinating grammatical conjunction “but” that indicates that more talk is coming.

Excerpt (6)

The teacher again latches onto the student (line 90), using a single-unit turn “okay” to indicate acknowledgment and, at the same time, to hand over the turn to the same student. By so doing, the teacher is creating more interactional space for the student and indicating a request to pursue the topic. This interactional strategy results in another complex multi-unit turn in which the student feels at liberty to introduce a new subtopic, as she compares the difference between being socially dependent and being academically dependent. She uses different devices to maintain the turn and express complex ideas, which indicates orientation towards interaction and the communication of ideas.

Despite the grammatical mistakes in the S(7) turn, the teacher follows a “let it pass” strategy (Firth, 1996), ignoring the error to ensure that the student interacts. In lines (94-95), the teacher uses a stretched newsmaker device “oh:::” to display change-of-state, followed by double discourse markers “okay okay” to show understanding. However, to maintain the turn and announce that more talk is forthcoming, the teacher uses the subordinate grammatical conjunction “but.” The teacher summarises what S5 has said “the difference is that S5 is talking about the difference socially”. In line (96), S5 takes the floor and offers an unsolicited explanation of what she had said earlier.
The teacher follows with a single unit “okay” that indicates acknowledgment and hands the turn back to the student. The teacher does not make any attempt to claim the turn. S5 latches onto the teacher’s turn (line 99) and further explains what she means. The teacher only overlaps to display active listenership “yeah”. S5 continues with yet another multi-unit turn by using the appositional device "but". Due to the misunderstanding that resulted from the emerging subtopic of being dependent versus independent at school and home, the students continue their attempts to justify what they meant. This is strong evidence of the students' orientation towards interactional competence and the establishment of mutual understanding. The teacher takes the floor (line 104) and offers a solution to the problems in the communication by paraphrasing what each of the students meant. Following a relatively long pause by the teacher (1.1), S7 retakes the floor and adds a further explanation of what she meant. The teacher uses a framing move “okay, okay” to display an understanding of the source of the problem and to show that she is prepared to move to the next phase or the next person.

The following excerpt (7) is evidence of the teacher’s success in creating an interactional space that resulted in more willingness to participate in the ongoing talk and, consequently, better interactional competence.

Excerpt (7)

In line (111), S8 shows her orientation towards participation. The teacher announces that she is moving towards her in a routine that the class understands as allocation of the next speaker. The nonverbal orientation of the teacher regarding the acceptance of the students’ participation is usually accompanied using the short response device “yes” to allocate the next speaker. S8 responds by producing an extended and complex turn (lines 113-116). The teacher does not attempt to interrupt or take the floor. She waits until the student reaches a TRP and uses “and” to build on the student’s previous response by asking her about her opinion regarding her mother’s behavior and whether it is good or bad. The student latches onto the teacher’s turn and whispers, “good”.

The teacher expresses difficulty in hearing what the student has said by repeating the source of the problem with a rising intonation to require confirmation of having heard the answer correctly. S8 confirms this in line (120) using a single-unit turn consisting of the short response token “yes”. The teacher repeats S8’s answer to the rest of the class in what is understood, in this context, as positive feedback and an indication of the end of the sequence.

This excerpt shows how the teacher’s minimum interruption of the students’ turns, as witnessed in excerpts (6), encouraged S8 to show orientation towards participation despite her
limited linguistics resources. Also, the teacher showed orientation towards meaning rather than
form by overlooking the grammatical mistakes and focusing on extending the conversation (line
117).

In the following excerpt, we see another example of an exchange between the teacher
and the student that led not only to encourage the student to use L2, but also to show orientation
to communication beyond the teacher’s original request.

**Excerpt (8)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>S9:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>T:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>S9:</td>
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<td>126</td>
<td>T:</td>
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<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>S9:</td>
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<td>128</td>
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<td>129</td>
<td>T:</td>
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<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>S9:</td>
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<td>131</td>
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<td>132</td>
<td>T:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>S9:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>T:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the teacher’s closure of the sequence in line (122), S9 displays an orientation
towards participation by raising her hand. The teacher establishes a mutual gaze with S9 and uses
“yeah” to allocate the turn. S9 then asks the teacher for permission to participate using the L1,
but the teacher refuses to grant her permission and asks her to try in English. The teacher’s
refusal results in a downgraded response prefaced by the phrase “I think” to show the student’s
epistemic stance.

The student follows this by a prolonged searching for words device “Um::” followed
by a complete turn. The teacher waits until the student reaches a TRP and latches onto her by
using active listenership device, “aha”, which indicates a request for the student to continue her
talk. The student retakes the turn and adds further illustration. The teacher latches onto S9 using
“okay” in a single-unit turn to display acknowledgment. S9 retakes the floor for the third time
and finishes her contribution by stating that nowadays, children raise themselves through their
experiences. The teacher indicates understanding using “okay” in lines (134-136) as
acknowledgment, and then reformulates the student’s answer. She then uses a question format to
initiate a new subsequence by directing the question to the entire class, asking them for their
opinions and whether they agree with S9 (Extract 9, lines 135-136).

**Excerpt (9)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>S6:</td>
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<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>S6:</td>
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<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>T:</td>
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<td>138</td>
<td>S5:</td>
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<td>140</td>
<td>S6:</td>
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<td>141</td>
<td>T:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>T:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>T:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the next excerpt, S6 tries to say something that is not audible, and the teacher acknowledges S6’s contribution and initiates a new sequence by asking for an addition to what S6 has said. S6 does not give up her attempt to contribute, as she raises her hand in a request to be given the floor. The teacher establishes a mutual gaze with her and allocates the turn. S6, as can be seen in Excerpt (10), asks for permission to initiate a side sequence by suggesting a different topic, “another subject” (line 144).

Excerpt (10)

144 S6: another subject
145 T: (smiling voice) another subject sure go ahead
146 S6: (inaudible)
147 T: yeah okay financially, money, yeah thank you
148 S10: "can fe harah we ketha" (tr. there was neighborhood and so on)
149 T: ((laughter)) "harah we ketha ma tenfa’a fe allayeeszi” (tr. neighborhood and so on this can not be said in English)
150 S6: ((laughter))
151 S10: "eywah ma tenfa’a" (tr. yes it can not)
152 T: (smiling voice)
153 S7: (laughter) (inaudible)
154 T: there is no "harah" (tr. neighborhood) and (laughter) no "eyyal" (tr. Boys) in the "harah" (tr. neighborhood)
155 S10: Ya'ani momken tokhreji aye wagt adi alwatha’ya’ani adi dhaeen ya’ani la troohla tokhreji (tr. meaning you can go out anytime and anywhere it was okay now you, I mean, don’t go)
156 S11: “hata ma’a alawalad kan adi (tr. even with boys it was okay)
157 T: aha
158 S11: “[da heen after asahwah sar mafee”(tr. now after the wakening (Islamic revolution) there is no trust)
159 S12: “can fe thiqah marah ziyadah” (tr. there was too much trust)
160 T: "thiqah” (tr. trust), yeah
161 S11: "ba’ad alsahwah sar mafee (tr. after the wakening (Islamic revolution) there is not anymore)
162 T: "ele heyyah” (tr. that is what)
163 S11: "ele ya’ani can ya’ani can yesheeyo...feal past can fe_
164 makanow meltazemeen be aladat we altagaleed. Mo aladat we
165 altagaleed zal mathalan daheen mammoo’a alikhitlat we kitha ya’ani kanat hayatuhum adyah ba’ad jaat alsahwah sarow
166 yegoolo mammoo’a alikhitlat (tr. Meaning, there was, they used to see, in the past there was, they were not sticking to customs and tradition. Not customs and tradition, like for example religion. Mingling was forbidden and so on. Meaning their life was normal. After the

wakening (Islamic revolution) happened they have started to say mingling is forbidden)
167 T: which is negative?
168 S11: yes, I think so
169 (1.1)
170 T: okay, yeah I agree with you. I just want to hear from you what you think because I don’t want (laughter)
171 you think because I don’t want (laughter)
172 (I don’t want to)

The teacher gives the green light to S6 to introduce a new topic (line 145), and S6 adds something that is not audible. The teacher (line 147) acknowledges S6’s contribution, but concludes the sequence without further explanation concerning the newly introduced topic, which indicates that she treats the newly introduced topic as irrelevant. S10 waits for the first possible TRP and takes the floor. However, she uses her L1 to initiate a new sequence and
introduces a new subtopic related to social life and neighborhoods. The teacher treats the contribution as humorous and repeats it, asking if the same answer can be given using English instead of the L1 (lines 150-151). The students understand the teacher's use of the L1 as humorous and reciprocate with laughter. S10 (line 148) treats the teacher's humor as a question and responds by confirming that she cannot answer in English: "yes I can not".

The teacher (line 152) maintains the humor and uses code-switching in a turn consisting of Arabic and English. The teacher's creative but amusing use of both languages was perceived as a green light to continue the communication in the L1 (Jawhar, 2018). Therefore, S10 retook the floor and produced an extended turn in the L1 in which she offered an explanation of what she meant in line (148). S11 waits until S10 reaches a TRP and takes the floor to add to the discussion. The teacher (line 162) uses a newsmaker device in a single-unit turn "aha" without claiming the floor. By so doing, the teacher opens a new interactional space for S11 to elaborate on her answer, although still using the L1. This also shows the teacher's and the students' orientation towards communication rather than towards accuracy. The teacher is eager to keep the communication going and give the students a chance to be heard, even if this means using the L1. S12 takes the floor once S11 reaches a TRP and adds to the ongoing topic (line 165). The teacher repeats part of S12's answer in what is understood as a request for clarification; however, S11 takes the floor and confirms what S12 has said: “after the wakening, there is not any more”.

The teacher (line 169) reformulates her question, asking overtly about what S11 means. S11 responds this time with an extended multi-unit turn in which she explains what she meant using different interactional competencies. For instance, she produces three false starts in which she interrupts her turn and makes a new start. She then uses self-initiated repair and reformulates her sentence, supporting her argument with an example. The teacher checks for understanding using a Wh-question with a rising intonation (line 175). The student responds to the teacher’s question with a degraded answer prefaced by the short response token “yes”. A lengthy pause (1.1) follows to give the student more time to elaborate, but when no further explanation is given, the teacher takes the floor and expresses acknowledgment and agreement with the student’s proposition. However, the teacher offers an explanation of the relatively long pause, adding that she just wanted to hear the opinion coming from the student herself.

This excerpt is an excellent example of the teacher's creative use of L1, topic management, active listenership devices, and confirmation request as interactional resources. It shows how the use of such simple techniques resulted in a multi-unit turn with a display of more advanced interactional competencies.

Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the primary interactional resources used by the teacher and how they led to increased engagement on the part of the students. The focus will mainly be on classroom interactional competence, as discussed by Walsh (2012). We will discuss the main interactional features such as the turn-taking process, topic management, repair, use of the L1, and extended waiting time, emphasizing how the teacher managed them. The argument, as mentioned earlier, is that by utilizing these interactional strategies, the teacher can encourage the students to be more involved in the ongoing conversation and induce better interactional competencies.
**Turn-taking**

In this class, as we have seen, although the turns are mainly allocated by the teacher, there are several instances of the turns being managed cooperatively in such a way that the students are free to take a turn whenever they wish. The teacher only allocates a turn to a particular student when she notices verbal or non-verbal orientation towards participation. In the few instances in which the teacher practices her traditional institutional role and allocates the next turn to a student who has not shown readiness to take it, confusion results, and the students sometimes show unwillingness to participate.

The students keep the floor using extended turns, and the teacher does not attempt to claim the turn. On the contrary, most of the time, the teacher uses short response tokens that indicate active listenership, which the students understand as a request for further illustration.

We have also seen examples in which the students take unsolicited turns, and the teacher understands these as further contributions. Because of her orientation towards communication and increased classroom interaction, the teacher submits and yields the turn to the student. This interactional technique results in extended turns consisting of complex ideas, which signifies advanced interactional competence in L2 (Young, 2013). The students' ability to maneuver the turn-taking system is excellent proof of the teacher’s success in inducing better interactional competence. Nevertheless, this skill would not be possible without the teacher giving up her tight control over the mechanism of turn taking and her right to interrupt and control the amount of time allocated to each student.

We also see many overlaps between the teacher's turns and those of the students. The overlap sometimes culminates in one party yielding the floor to the original speaker. However, on other occasions, mainly when the original speaker is the teacher, the overlap does not give the student the right to take the turn away from the teacher. However, the students in this class are attentive to the teacher’s talk as they are oriented towards TRP when producing a response in an overlapping position. The students in this data show a high degree of interactional competence in terms of their understanding of the TRP. They display their understanding using latching and overlaps. Between-turns gaps are rarely witnessed, and the conversation seems to be characterized by a rapid pace.

**Active listenership**

The teacher’s extensive use of active listenership devices has succeeded in eliciting complex multi-unit turns, with more than one idea expressed by the students. Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1978) discussed the notion of “active listening”, considering it necessary to participate in a conversation. McCarthy (2003) examined the same idea and emphasized the critical role of the listener in constructing intersubjectivity simply by being attentive to the other interlocutor.

The teacher’s use of active listenership also results in topic expansion by the students, something that linguists such as Waring (2002) consider a crucial topic development move. It shows a great deal of understanding on the part of the students, as well as an ability to express themselves beyond the original topic. This reflects the students’ interactional competence in L2 (Young, 2013; Walsh, 2012). When used appropriately by the teacher, active listenership devices
also support the students and present proof of the teacher’s comprehension of what they have said, which leads to further participation.

**Repair**

The teacher’s use of questions to help the students extend the topic under development results in multi-unit turns in which several interactional resources are used, including self-initiated repair. When a breakdown in the communication occurs, the teacher refrains from using the less-preferred, other-initiated repair. On the contrary, she uses techniques such as clarification requests and confirmation checks to allow the students to carry out the preferred self-repair in the form of questions.

The students sometimes use L1 to establish mutual understanding, particularly when intersubjectivity is threatened or a communication breakdown occurs. The teacher, however, does not seem to object to this use. In fact, she encourages it by responding in L1. However, the use of L1 is abandoned once intersubjectivity is re-established, or the topic under development reaches a termination point.

**Extended wait time**

In this dataset, the teacher’s extended waiting time results in some instances of post-expansion on the part of the students (Schegloff, 2007). The teacher in this data set tends to delay the feedback step in the traditional triadic IRF/E. In fact, she sometimes replaces the possible negative evaluation with a reformulation of the student’s response. This is understood as a request for confirmation, as proved by the subsequent turn. This technique encourages the students to communicate freely without concerns regarding their linguistic competency.

**Topic management**

Generally speaking, the conversation in these data is goal-oriented, as it lasts for a long time once it begins, and the topic is maintained over a long stretch of talk. Regarding topic management, the teacher in this class maintains the original topic; however, because the topic is relatively free, the students can suggest new subtopics, and the teacher seems to encourage this. Nevertheless, the teacher signals the concluding move in each sequence and the shifts to the next one via the use of discourse markers and response tokens that indicate agreement or acknowledgment, followed by the allocation of the next speaker’s turn. Despite this, the students play a highly active role in the development of the topics.

We also observed a great deal of mutuality and collaboration among the students and the teacher, particularly regarding topic development.

We noted the teacher’s use of syntactic elements to link the turns and the tremendous sense of joint responsibility to maintain the interaction by all interactants. On the other hand, the teacher tended to use many open-ended questions to help the students extend the topic under development, thus increasing their interactional space.

The conversation was generally characterized by multiple subtopics related to the central theme, or those that mainly stemmed from the original topic suggested by the teacher in the opening move.
Conclusion

This paper is a detailed microanalysis of a transcript of part of a reading comprehension classroom. The teacher in this data set takes the students a step further in their comprehension by announcing a new phase in which they are required to display understanding by applying the knowledge they have acquired from the reading passage to their own lives. What is interesting about this move is the teacher’s ability to encourage students with limited linguistic resources to employ complex interactional competencies and to become fully engaged in the classroom discussion.

We present examples of how teachers can help their students develop a better understanding and display better interactional competencies by carefully utilizing different interactional resources. It is hoped that the result will help EFL/ESL teachers to attain a better understanding of CIC in EFL. It is also hoped that this paper will add to the body of work that has been done to conceptualize IC in institutional contexts, namely, the classroom.

The discussion in this paper also highlights the importance of CIC as an additional skill that should be introduced deliberately, in addition to other linguistic skills, in any EFL/ESL classroom.

Further, it is essential to discuss the role of teachers’ awareness of their use of interactional resources and the implications of such use on their students’ abilities to become better conversationalists (Eskildsen, 2021).

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Arab World English Journal
ISSN: 2229-9327

**Appendix (A)**
A copy of the introduction to the lesson in the student’s book.
Egyptian Educators’ Online Teaching Challenges and Coping Strategies during COVID-19

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Received: 7/29/2021 Accepted: 10/9/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
The present descriptive study investigated the challenges experienced and the coping strategies used by Egyptian university educators from different institution types while teaching online during the pandemic. The cross-sectional study drew participants (N = 222) from three different academic institution types, private universities, public universities, and adult education institutions, who responded to a survey that examined the technical, professional, administrative, social, and psychological challenges teachers encountered as well as their coping strategies. Data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Results indicated that the challenges and coping strategies reported by teachers varied according to the teaching context and the requirements of each academic institution. The most reported challenges experienced were exhaustion, internet problems, technical issues, and anxiety. Despite the challenges, participants reported a few positive effects, including feeling more productive, being motivated to learn something new, feeling appreciated by the students and administration, and feeling confident using online teaching tools. Results also revealed that the participants used social and professional strategies to cope with the circumstances accompanying the sudden shift to online teaching. The results indicated how challenges faced by educators from different institution types may diminish with more training on, and experience with, online teaching, forming communities of practice as well as other coping strategies they developed. Such findings should be helpful to educators, institutions, and policymakers in different academic institutions all over the world and in various teaching contexts.

Keywords: challenges, coping strategies, Egyptian educators, institution type, online teaching, Covid-19 pandemic.

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.19
Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak, which hit some countries in late 2019, was declared a worldwide pandemic in the early weeks of 2020 (Lone & Ahmad, 2020; Di Gennaro et al., 2020). The deadly potential of the virus evoked individual and government responses, with many countries suddenly halting communal activities and declaring lockdown. New ways of executing transactions were sought, mainly virtually, like online shopping and teleworking; and online teaching and learning replaced face-to-face interaction.

One of the significant sectors impacted by the pandemic lockdown was the educational sector. Students and teachers had to face the reality of school shutdowns and the need to meet online for classes, activities, and assessments (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia & Koole, 2020; Teräs, Suoranta & Teräs, 2020). Many teachers were faced with the challenge of learning to use a relatively new medium of instruction overnight as educational institutions sought and implemented new platforms that required training for both students and teachers on how to use the latest platforms in conducting classes: how to upload the material, how to ensure teacher-student interaction, and how to provide reliable assessments online.

When the pandemic struck, some institutions already had online components incorporated into their educational programs, especially well-funded private ones. Still, many programs suffered from a lack of funds to even contract a platform, let alone provide the training and support needed for their launch. In Egypt, some private universities had already incorporated online components into their educational programs (like emails, blogs, podcasts, google forms, Facebook groups, and LMSs such as Blackboard and Moodle), whereas public universities utilized very few, if any, online elements and depended mainly if not solely on face-to-face teaching. Access to technology was also limited for many students and teachers, depending on their demographic and socio-economic backgrounds.

In Egypt, with the rise in COVID-19 cases in early Spring 2020, each educational institution responded individually. Most private universities and adult education institutions were able to shift to full online teaching quickly and easily and provided the needed training and support. In contrast, most public universities either maintained face-to-face classes or implemented various degrees of hybrid education. Eventually, a decision to close all educational facilities was decreed on the national level on 14th March 2020 (Enterprise, 2020) due to the soaring number of COVID-19 cases. In response, those Egyptian institutions that had already made the shift to online teaching continued with no delay, while others that had no ready online platform had to make do, unprepared, with posting and sharing material online asynchronously (Mostafa, 2020). They gradually came to terms with full online teaching, experimenting with free media, and seeking more efficient platforms. It took public universities time to secure the necessary government funds to afford online platforms, after which they started training on the new mode.

Because teachers and students in most academic institutions in Egypt had little or no previous experience in the use of online platforms, professional development and information technology training and support for teachers and students alike were needed acutely during this transition, though in some institutions more than others (Khalil et al., 2020). Training was urgently necessary for teachers in the technical aspects of managing classes and designing and administering online assessments, as well as the pedagogical issues of online teaching and
learning such as conducting group work and enhancing student interaction online.

All such training and new dynamics involved daunting challenges. They added to teachers’ workload, forced many teachers beyond their comfort zones, and aggravated their elevated stress levels. The challenges and anxieties experienced by teachers were voiced both formally and informally. Many teachers formed communities of practice to provide technological, pedagogical, and psychological support. Together, they developed some strategies to cope with this “new normal.” The present study, therefore, investigates the challenges faced and the coping strategies used by Egyptian educators from different institution types. It was triggered by the authors’ interest in the ways educators in different academic institutions addressed the challenges they encountered in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Results of the study would add to the body of research on online teaching. It would also give teachers insight as to how to deal with the pandemic-related challenges that have become common among educators in different parts of the world.

**Research Questions**

Based on the above, the present study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of pandemic-associated online-teaching challenges (e.g., technical, professional, and psychological) were experienced by Egyptian university educators in the three institution types (private and public universities, and adult education)?

2. What types of coping strategies (e.g., technical, professional, and social) were used by Egyptian university educators in the three institution types?

**Literature Review**

This section reviews research on the impact of online teaching on educators and how they have coped with the sources of stress associated with the situation. The studies cover various geographical locations, focusing on the challenges teachers have faced while teaching online, strategies they have employed to cope, and the positive effects they have experienced, nevertheless. As far as the present research is concerned, no studies have been conducted on Egyptian university educators, which this study attempts to explore.

**Challenges**

Several research studies have explored the challenges encountered by university educators while teaching online, whether before or during the Coronavirus pandemic. The challenges they covered were psychological, administrative, and technical ones.

Bennett (2014) explored the effect of adopting online teaching tools on British teachers’ negative emotions, including anxiety, fear, humiliation, or anger. The analysis identified such adverse outcomes of online teaching tools as a) personal identity (in terms of fear of inadequacy), b) taking the blame for failures in the system (giving rise to feelings of embarrassment and frustration), and c) working with others, depending on how critical colleagues are of them and the technology and the resultant humiliation, and emotional battle inhibiting and challenging dominant practices.

In the same year, Windes and Lesht (2014) examined the attitudes of faculty teaching in different academic institution types toward online teaching. Participants included teachers with
and without online teaching experience from three different American institution types: private, public, and community colleges. A total of 342 teachers participated in the study. Teachers belonging to the three institution types faced the same challenges, however, to different degrees. The most common of these challenges were the loss of face-to-face interaction with students, time commitment, adapting the curriculum to be taught online, the quality of teaching being affected, and concerns about the right to intellectual property.

In 2020, during the Coronavirus pandemic, Schaffhauser explored the challenges associated with online teaching. An extensive survey was administered to approximately 1000 American K-12 teachers. Expectedly, most responses were negative (“uncertain” (81%), “stressed” (77%), “anxious” (75%), “overwhelmed” (74%), “sad” (60%) and “lonely” (54%) as well as exhausted, unsupported, and unappreciated). Additionally, teachers were most concerned about the students’ overall well-being; lack of social time among students; teachers’ lack of face-to-face connection with students; and lack of access to identifying if students were struggling. The study underlined the need for quick courses for teachers on using online technology, developing online creative activities, strategies for enhancing student interaction online, techniques for identifying weak students remotely, and enhancing student-teacher connection.

Another study, by Hyseni-Duraku and Hoxha (2020), examined the challenges associated with remote learning. To achieve that goal, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and parents from different regions of Kosovo. Teachers reported that home isolation and the changes associated with it led to teacher anxiety, discomfort, confusion, and the overload of information related to online teaching. The challenges teachers encountered included the large number of students to handle, teachers’ ongoing communication with parents, and students’ difficulty in dealing with technology. Teachers suggested they should enhance their level of knowledge in technology, as well as the level of communication with students during online teaching.

Hassan, Gamji, Nasidi and Azmi (2021) explored the challenges faced by international ESL students during the pandemic. They used a qualitative method to collect their data, namely focus group interviews with 15 international students at a Cypriot university. Their findings indicated that the challenges were mainly related to internet connectivity, insufficient knowledge of web-based tools, and failure to upload large files.

Similarly, Alvi, Bilal, and Alvi (2021) examined the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic imposed on university teachers and students of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course in Saudi Arabia. Twenty EFL teachers were interviewed while 80 female students in a medical preparatory year responded to a questionnaire. The findings of the interviews and the questionnaire indicated that internet issues, lack of computer literacy and technical competence, as well as lack of digital resources in the subject matter taught were among the complaints the participants reported. Technophobia was another emotional challenge experienced by teachers and students alike.

The research reviewed in this section, even though in different parts of the world (e.g., Cyprus, Kosovo, Saudi Arabia, UK, and US), agreed on the types of challenges encountered while teaching online, whether before or during the Covid-19 pandemic. These include, but are
not limited to, stress, anxiety, workload, exhaustion, and lack of support. The present study aimed to explore the challenges experienced by Egyptian university educators in relation to online teaching during the pandemic.

**Positive Effects**

Several studies have also examined the positive effects associated with the use of online teaching, whether before or during the Covid-19 pandemic. This section spans the period between 2009 and 2020. Despite the variety in the background of the educators explored, there seems to be an agreement about the type of positive effects generally experienced by teachers.

Sørebø, Halvari, Gulli and Kristiansen (2009) investigated Norwegian teachers’ motivation to continue using online technology voluntarily in online courses. Specifically, the study investigated how the fulfillment of basic needs like e-learning competence affected teachers’ sense of usefulness and enjoyment. The questionnaire responses obtained indicated the positive impact of perceived autonomy and perceived competence on teachers’ intrinsic motivation as a predictor of intentions to continue using e-learning. The study emphasized the need for user training and support not only before online learning onset but as a continuous part of its subsequent use.

Emotional wellbeing was another positive aspect explored by Bennett (2014). She examined the effect of opting to use new technological teaching practices on high education lecturers’ emotional wellbeing in the UK. She explored the positive impact of loving work, enjoyment, and confidence. The participants of this study were 16 higher education lecturers ranging in experience from six years of teaching to first timers using Web 2.0 tools. The study used lengthy interviews, which were analyzed using Coupland, Brown, Daniels, and Humphreys’ (2008) analytical framework of emotional upgrading and downgrading and coping strategies. Positive emotions were identified regarding teachers’ growing confidence in their skills and expertise, and support received from co-workers.

In 2020, during the Coronavirus pandemic, Schaffhauser’s study aimed to explore the challenges mentioned above, and the successes (both pedagogical and psychological) associated with online teaching. In their extensive survey, administered to approximately 1000 American K-12 teachers, some positive emotions were expressed, indicating self-efficacy (including “capable” (77%), “motivated” (66%), and “confident” (61%)). However, teachers’ confidence seemed to emerge more from their abilities to adjust (81%) than from their students’ abilities to do so (57%).

The above review of studies exploring the positive effects of online teaching in relation to the pandemic reveals various positive feelings. The studies reviewed, except for the last one, were conducted prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. One interesting observation is that the positive outcomes of online teaching before the pandemic, namely motivation, confidence, and capability, were also identified in relation to online teaching during the pandemic.

**Coping Strategies**

This section reviews research carried out on strategies used by educators to cope with the challenges associated with online teaching, whether before or during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Hyseni-Duraku and Hoxha (2020), besides examining the impact of the pandemic on teachers and students, explored recommendations by teachers and parents to cope with the situation. Their semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents showed, among other things, that teachers suggested they should enhance their level of knowledge in technology, as well as the level of communication with students during online teaching. The authors concluded that, by following certain strategies, teachers in Kosovo were ready and motivated to upgrade their skills to enhance the quality of education in the country.

In an Indian university teaching context, Roy (2020) focused on communication modes between students and teachers. Because of the flexible nature of online instruction, teachers had the opportunity to diversify the tools they used during the pandemic, ranging from email or WhatsApp groups to video conferencing tools like Webex and Zoom, and teaching web platforms like Moodle and Google Classroom. Roy’s article concludes with advice for teachers to use what is suitable and enjoyable for them to do an excellent job teaching online.

Other attempts have been made to meet teachers’ needs to cope during the pandemic. William Woods University cited the initiatives made by different organizations and businesses to combat the crisis (2020). Several tips were provided to teachers in dealing with online teaching, mainly to keep everything simple, to make use of one digital platform for students to use from home, to give students more autonomy with assignments and tasks, as well as engage students through connecting with them on an individual basis.

Matvienko, Kuzmina, Yamchynska, Kuzmin and Glazunova (2021) investigated how teachers coped with challenges encountered at a Ukrainian university because of the pandemic. They applied a mixed method, engaging 206 full-time and 115 future part-time teachers of English in responding to a questionnaire. The results of their study underscored the significance of lifelong learning and self-education. The authors concluded that in facing the many drawbacks of the Ukrainian educational system, a great deal depends on the will to become “agents of change”.

Similarly, Alvi et al.’s (2021) study of the challenges faced by university teachers and students in a Saudi ESP program made a number of recommendations to cope with such challenges. The authors suggested nurturing teachers’ and students’ digital competencies, incorporating both synchronous and asynchronous interactive activities between faculty and students, as well as organizing faculty development programs to promote the different competencies of faculty, digital, pedagogical, and technical. Hassan et al. (2021) made a similar recommendation of developing training and orientation programs to support educators in Cyprus at times of need.

The studies reviewed in this section on coping strategies reveal that educators have resorted to various ways to deal with online teaching. While before the pandemic, educators tended to focus on pedagogical factors, during the pandemic, there has been more reliance on psychological factors, showing compassion and empathy, as well as effective communication. This is in
addition to a realistic approach to face the challenges, like improving teachers’ technological skills and giving clear instructions about what is expected of students.

This review of the literature has, thus, focused on three primary variables in relation to online teaching, before and during the pandemic: challenges, positive emotions, and coping strategies. It has identified similarities in emotions associated with online teaching, positive and negative, and it has demonstrated several strategies that educators have employed to deal with the stresses associated with online teaching in general, either in 2020 or before. However, it has made clear that no studies to date have examined the Egyptian context in terms of the discrepancies among different academic institutions in the kinds of challenges faced by teachers and/or the various methods employed to address these challenges. The present study aims to add to the body of research on online teaching by examining such factors in a new teaching context, that of Egypt, in three institution types: adult education, private universities, and public universities, through eliciting Egyptian educators’ responses to a survey that deals with challenges and coping strategies during the pandemic.

Methods

Design
This is a cross-sectional descriptive study with a quantitative-qualitative design. It investigates the pandemic-associated online-teaching challenges and the various types of coping strategies used by Egyptian university educators at three institution types: adult education, private universities, and public universities.

Survey
A survey was created specifically for the study. It consisted of three parts: a) demographic data and information regarding the online teaching context, b) challenges regarding online teaching during the pandemic, and c) coping strategies. Question types varied, including five-point Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. (See Appendix for the complete survey.)

Ethical Considerations
The survey was validated by two educators, one from a public university, the other from a private university. Their feedback was taken into consideration when finalizing the survey. Next, IRB approval was sought by one of the researchers through her university Institutional Research Board. Complying with IRB requirements, the survey informed participants about the purpose of the research, and the possible uses of the data for research and/or conference presentation, promised anonymity, and sought respondent consent before participation.

Data Collection
Initially, the survey was piloted before obtaining IRB approval in November 2020; this helped refine a few of the survey questions for better clarity. Once IRB approval was obtained, the data collected from the pilot was discarded entirely.

In collecting the actual data used in the present study, messages were sent in December 2020 and January 2021 to department heads, course coordinators as well as various university staff contacts via email, WhatsApp, and Facebook. Such messages requested participation and
dissemination. They were followed up with reminders until a reasonable number of responses was obtained.

**Statistical Tests**

The responses obtained were analyzed statistically using Excel sheets to obtain descriptive statistics. Mainly, three statistical tests were used, namely, frequency counts, means and percentages. To normalize the unequal numbers of the respondents from the different institution types compared, percentages within each educational institution type were used instead of the actual frequency counts. Additionally, the “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” responses were calculated together, and so were the “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree,” while the “Neutral” was calculated independently, thus providing simpler statistics for the three institution types involved.

**Participants**

The target participants for the study were Egyptian university educators from three different institution types. Therefore, stratified sampling was implemented in the sense that it included participants from the three target categories. However, the numbers of the three category members collected were unequal. The sampling was also convenient as the sample included only participants who were available and willing to take part in the survey despite the probable bias of not including those who did not volunteer to participate.

After excluding non-Egyptians and schoolteachers from those who responded to the survey over the period from 25/12/2020 to 19/1/2021, the participant body from the three institution types was as follows: 45 adult education instructors, 78 private university instructors and 99 public education instructors, totaling 222 instructors. They varied in age, gender, educational background, teaching status, and experience with technology (namely, computers and the different online platforms used).

While adult education instructors were mainly part-timers (95.5%), most public university educators were full-timers (95%), and almost two-thirds of the instructors working in private institutions were full-timers. As for gender, the participants from the three academic institution types were predominantly females (90%).

The educational background of the participants was as follows. The majority (64.5%) of those teaching adults had a BA, while most private university instructors (61.5%) had an MA. Interestingly, those who had a Ph.D. and others who held post-doctoral positions at public universities were divided equally (41.5%), together comprising the majority of public university respondents.

As for experience with technology, two-thirds of the participants from the three institution types (total 66.5%) had experience of 20+ years using computers. Also, almost half the participants (47.5%) rated their computer literacy skills as “Very Good,” almost none thought of their skills as poor, while nearly one-third said they had excellent computer literacy skills.

As for the teaching modes implemented during the pandemic, most respondents from the three institution types (58.5%) applied a hybrid system, including face-to-face and online
teaching. As can be seen from Table One below, while public university instructors were the ones who applied hybrid teaching the most (90%) due to the late provision of online platforms and the limited opportunities for technical training till the time of the survey in the public sector, the majority of instructors in adult education institutions (80%) employed online teaching only, while private university educators were more inclined to teach fully online (59%).

Table 1. Online teaching mode used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid mode</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online mode only</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the duration of online teaching reported at the time of the survey in December 2020, most instructors (72%) reported using online teaching for two terms. On the other hand, while 15% used it for one term only and were still struggling with it when they took the survey, very few (5.5%) reported having used it for three terms. This shows that the majority only resorted to online teaching after the pandemic and lockdown in March 2020.

In terms of the platforms used in such online teaching, most respondents indicated that they used more than one online platform. Zoom has been the one mostly used in all three institution types (83%). This was followed by Blackboard (43.5%), Microsoft Teams (29.5%), and Google Classroom (28%). While most instructors in private universities (93.5%) and public universities (82%) leaned heavily on Zoom, adult education teachers used Moodle (84%), much more than their private and public education counterparts (37% and 22%, respectively). A host of other platforms were used by all three institution types, though to a much lesser degree (13% altogether); those included Facebook live, Gourmet, WhatsApp, Edmodo, Preply, Schoology, Jamboard, Webex, and Acadox. All in all, the numbers indicate that an average of two platforms was used by every respondent, reflecting an amount of experimentation in online teaching till they settled on the most convenient ones for themselves and their students.

Analysis

This section reports the results of the analysis of the survey responses by participants from all three institution types: adult education, private universities, and public universities. It includes both the challenges the instructors faced and the coping strategies they employed to deal with them.

Challenges

The challenges reported were found to fall into four main categories, namely technical, administrative, professional, and psychological ones.

Technical Challenges

Reporting on technical issues, a little less than half of all participants indicated they had internet connectivity problems, as shown in Table Two; almost half of those who worked at private and public universities (48.5% and 47.5%, respectively) had to face this challenge. In contrast, those who encountered problems in adult education institutions were fewer than those
who did not. An instructor from a private university complained of the “Internet pricing compared to the [quality of the] eervice [sic],” which probably explains why the option of purchasing adequate internet bundles was not common practice. Some explained that even when they did, the connectivity was still inadequate for the higher demands on synchronous audio-visual streaming, and uploads and downloads for all their classes.

Table 2. Internet connectivity problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When reporting on the technical support they received when transitioning to teaching online, as Table Three below illustrates, the instructors, in general, tended to be neutral (M = 3.07). However, more than half of those teaching in public universities (54.5%) reported they had no or minimal technical support. Conversely, more than half the educators teaching in private and adult institutions (60% and 51%, respectively) acknowledged having received adequate technical support. Interestingly, the comments by instructors in private institutions were somewhat contradictory. While one instructor stated that “They offered nothing that I found of use!”, another commented that “Trainings [sic] and courses were conducted to keep us updated and unified.” A third one still maintained that “I hardly needed any, so I can't judge.” In contrast, the late introduction of technical support in many public institutions was indicated in the responses.

Table 3. Enough technical support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Table Four below, the majority of all instructors who took part in the research (60%) indicated that they found online system tools easy to understand. There was greater agreement on such ease of use by instructors of adults (84%). Very few instructors in the three institution types, (12%), found online tools difficult to understand. One of the instructors in a private university replied, “Not all of them. However, the idea is how to merge them into your lessons and tasks to make the best use of them.” Another instructor stated, “I don't need to understand more than the one/two I need to use. Yes, those are easy to understand.”
Table 4. Ease using online system tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrative Challenges

In addition to the technical challenges in using online tools, participants commented on administrative challenges. As for administrative support received during the pandemic, Table Five below shows that support was reported to be received mostly by instructors in adult education (69%), followed by instructors in private universities (54%). In comparison, the instructors at public universities ranked third (only 27%). Adult education and private university educators complained of administrative issues unrelated to online teaching (e.g., job insecurity). On the other hand, a teacher from a public university complained of the lack of training or orientation during the transition to hybrid teaching and learning. This complaint is supported by the 41.5% public university educators who opined they did not receive adequate administrative support during the transition to online teaching.

Table 5. Adequate administrative support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to administrative support received during the pandemic, participants were also asked about how far they felt appreciated by the administration. Table Six shows that approximately half of all the participants (48%) generally felt appreciated by the administration of their institution. The highest percentage was in those teaching adults (62%), followed by teachers at private universities (57.5%), while educators at public universities (35%) were in the minority. Conversely, the complaint of not feeling appreciated by the administration was made by 30% of public university educators, but by much fewer of their counterparts. One instructor teaching adults stated, “Certificates of appreciation and many signs of recognition are always offered by the organization to support their faculty.” Another from a private institution maintained that “The administration keeps sending emails that they appreciate teachers' patience and perseverance during the pandemic.” In contrast, an instructor at a public university stated, “the administration rarely considers the efforts we exert in facilitating online teaching.”
Table 6. Administrative appreciation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Challenges

Respondents to the survey also commented on the professional challenges they faced during the pandemic. As clear from Table Seven below, most respondents felt equally motivated to learn something new (65.5%). About two-thirds of those teaching in private institutions (70.5%) and slightly smaller percentages in the other two institution types reacted in the same way. However, one teacher in adult education stated, “I want to master what I know to do it well first.”. On the other hand, an instructor in a private institution stated, “The key is to motivate the learners and make them interact,” while another explained, “I do my best to learn …, but at the same time, I don't want to be distracted with too many things.”

Table 7. Motivation to learn more about online teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents also rated how far they felt appreciated by students when teaching online. Table Eight below indicates that the number of teachers who felt appreciated (49%) was much higher than those who did not (15%). While most of those who felt appreciated were instructors who teach adults (60%), teachers in private and public universities also felt appreciated, though at a lower rate (47.5% and 45.5%, respectively). One adult education instructor commented, “I receive many positive comments complementing [sic] my dedication and efforts. The students really appreciate that.”

Table 8. Appreciation by students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As for how confident instructors felt regarding teaching online, Table Nine below indicates that more than half of the participants (63.5%) felt confident teaching online. While the majority of instructors in adult education and private universities (89% and 70.5% respectively) felt this way, slightly less than half the teachers in public universities (46.5%) experienced the same feeling. Conversely, about one-fifth of public university educators (21%) indicated they were not confident using online tools. One of those public university instructors commented by stating, “I am still learning and discovering new things, but those tools I know are fine with me.”, while another explained by saying, “I like to experiment and try new tools; the more I practice, the more confident I become,” thus indicating gradually increasing confidence, expected to match that of their peers with more use of online teaching.

Table 9. Confidence using online teaching tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In responding to a question regarding their ability to relax when teaching online, as Table 10 below shows, the teachers were divided. Both adult education and public university instructors were more inclined to have a hard time relaxing than not, while the reverse was true for private university teachers. In their comments, many instructors attributed this to their failure at work-life balance. One instructor in adult education stated, “Online teaching is very demanding and can sometimes become very overwhelming. Many times, the fact that we have many other responsibilities is forgotten and it becomes very hard to draw lines between work and personal life.” In contrast, an instructor teaching in a private university stated, “I am totally in my comfort zone.” Another respondent, who had trouble feeling relaxed, said, “I feel anxious because I cannot guarantee the stability of the connection, especially for my students.” Responses to this question thus indicated varied attitudes in all three institution types alike.

Table 10. Having a hard time feeling relaxed when teaching online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concerning the teachers’ productivity, Table 11 below illustrates that 40.5% of all instructors who responded to the survey had an increased level of productivity when teaching online. A large number of those come from private universities and adult education (52.5% and 44.5%, respectively). In their comments, adult education and private university instructors agreed that online teaching saved commute time and effort, which helped increase productivity. An instructor from a private university commented that the time wasted on commuting was reallocated to more productive activities. On the other hand, one instructor in a public university stated, “In terms of preparing for classes, yes. But in terms of doing research, a resounding no. I hardly have the time, let alone the desire and clarity of mind.” It is interesting how the public university educators’ accountability for continuous research was highly jeopardized by the extra duties of learning how to use the new platforms.

Table 11. Increase in work productivity when teaching online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Psychological Challenges

As for psychological challenges, one question in the survey addressed how anxious teachers felt when teaching online. Table 12 below indicates that instructors in the three institution types, on the whole, were not anxious (M = 2.81). While educators at private institutions seemed to be the least anxious (43.5%), those teaching adults and teaching at public universities seemed to be divided; almost one-third of each group reported they did not feel anxious while another third reported feeling anxious, and the rest were neutral. One instructor teaching adults indicated that “Good preparation and familiarity with the platform features reduce the stress levels dramatically.” Another teaching at a private university stated, “I feel anxious at the beginning of the session and as the class progresses my students and I generally get over the anxiety.” Backup plans helped some teachers avoid anxiety, as clear from the comment by an instructor at a public university, who said, “I feel comfortable and have a couple of back up plans for power cut[s] or bad internet connection.”

Table 12. Anxiety when teaching online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another survey item related to instructors’ level of frustration while teaching online. Table 13 below illustrates that one quarter of all the respondents experienced frustration (25.5%). Slightly fewer educators at public universities and adult education institutions seemed to experience frustration (22% and 24.5%, respectively) than their counterparts in private universities (30.5%). Of those who explained their causes of frustration, a teacher from a public university said, “I feel like begging for students to participate, answer my questions or even respond to my comprehension checks!” Similarly, one instructor teaching adults indicated, “It can be overwhelming when not prepared appropriately.” At the same time, a teacher from a private university stated, “Sometimes I do [feel frustrated], when I feel students are not doing what they are supposed to do.”

Table 13. *Frustration while teaching online*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the level of exhaustion instructors experienced when teaching online, Table 14 indicates that, on average, more than half of all the participants (57.5%) reported feeling exhausted. Interestingly, the same percentage from the three institution types reported the same level of exhaustion. One instructor teaching adults indicated that “It requires more time and effort for the preparation and the online performance to keep the students engaged and motivated through a screen,” while another from a private university opined that “I sometimes feel exhausted because I believe the workload is just more than ordinary. Students’ conferences would take hours instead of 15 to 20 minutes if they were face to face.” Another source of exhaustion was identified by an instructor from a public university who said, “blue light is an issue” due to the strain on eyes caused by screen overuse.

Table 14. *Exhaustion when teaching online*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section on the challenges educators have encountered during the pandemic covered four main types: technical, administrative, professional, and psychological. There were differences in the levels of agreement and disagreement among the teachers belonging to the three institution types, not only in the types of challenges, but in the strategies used to cope with these challenges, as discussed in the following section.
Coping Strategies

Having established the challenges faced by teachers from the three institution types, the study also investigated the coping strategies they reported employing while teaching online. These fall into two main groups, namely technical/professional and social coping strategies. However, the distinctions can be fuzzy at times, and some strategies may fall into more than one category.

Technical and Professional Coping Strategies

Participants from the different institution types reported trying to boost their online teaching skills through employing the following strategies: enhancing internet connectivity, looking for relevant online tutorials, and seeking help from peers. Although many internet users in Egypt complain of internet connectivity as relatively limited and unstable, when asked about internet connectivity in online teaching, a few instructors teaching adults explained that they coped with the wired DSL internet problems through the help of extra internet bundles, higher speed subscriptions, and supplementary Wi-Fi devices.

As for the skills involved in using the new platforms, the majority (69%) said they watched online tutorials on using technology in teaching. Instructors of adults demonstrated the highest percentage (75.5%), followed by educators at public universities (70.5%), then by those teaching at private institutions (63%). Commenting on how effective such tutorials were, one instructor at an adult education institution said they were “very effective, always accessible and varied.” In the same vein, another from a public university commented that “tutorials are a teacher's best friend! I would not survive without them because I am always curious, and I like to master the online tools I am using.”

Similarly, one of the coping strategies observed informally before the study and investigated in the survey was how far instructors formed communities of practice and resorted to colleagues for help with technical problems. The survey responses indicated that, on average, more than half of the participants (62%) resorted to colleagues to help them deal with IT problems. This was true of educators in all three institution types (55.5% adult education, 60% private institutions, and 66.5% public universities). For instance, one instructor in an adult education institution commented, “It saves time and effort especially when you need an instant help [sic.]”, and another in a private university stated, “Sharing information and troubleshooting is always very useful.” Another educator at a public university maintained that “it’s helpful sometimes to share our tricks for resolving technical issues or managing online classes,” while another stated that it - restoring to colleagues for technical help - is “quicker and more effective than watching videos.”

Social Coping Strategies

Social coping strategies were also investigated with a special focus on the use of social media. When asked about their use of social media as a coping strategy, the majority of the respondents (73% - with an overall mean of 4.06) said they socialized with family and friends during lockdown on different social media platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook, and/or Instagram). As for socializing with friends using audio and/or video tools (like Zoom, and FaceTime), respondents from the three institution types reported that socializing with friends using audio and/or video tools was not as common (M = 2.89).

The study also investigated the different purposes of using social media; more than half of the
survey participants used social media for “sharing” (54%). This mostly applied to instructors of adults (57.5%), followed by instructors in public universities (55.5%), and to a lesser degree by those in private universities (50%). Respondents were also queried about using social media for “caring.” Almost two-thirds of the respondents reported using social media for caring (63%). Instructors teaching adults and those teaching at public universities were almost identical (69% and 68.5%, respectively), while those teaching in private institutions ranked third (52.5%). Among the positive comments on such social media use by instructors from public universities, one explained, “It brings people together. It helps in sharing one’s experience.” In contrast, another educator said, “Sometimes they work and sometimes they are not enough.”, while another one deemed them “Not effective! We only share jokes and memes about failed online teaching [sic].”

**Discussion**

This study aimed to gain a better understanding of the impact of online teaching on Egyptian university teachers and the strategies they used to cope with the challenges associated with the situation. Some areas proved to be quite challenging, while others were much less so. Interestingly, in the middle of this demanding transition to online teaching, some resultant positive emotions were identified, like being motivated, feeling more productive, being able to relax, and feeling appreciated by the students and/or administration. These positive effects would hopefully help reduce the negative impact of the challenges experienced and would help teachers see alternative coping mechanisms to develop a healthier lifestyle.

**Challenges Faced during Online Teaching**

The study investigated several challenges experienced by the teachers of the three institution types (adult education, and private and public universities) in relation to the pandemic-related transition to online teaching. These included internet connectivity issues, as reported by almost half of the educators teaching in private and public universities. This is obviously a factor that merits consideration since it is a common challenge during online teaching. This finding agrees with Hyseni-Duraku and Hoxha (2020) and Hassan et al. (2021). Both studies identified internet issues as one of the sources of stress, though with students only, rather than instructors as the case is with Egyptian teachers in the present study. The main plausible reason for this anxiety is that internet connection instability, even for a few minutes, makes teachers concerned that students may miss out on important class content. Alvi et al. (2021) relate such recurrent connection problems to technophobia as another emotional challenge experienced by teachers and students alike.

Another challenge the present study investigated had to do with technical resources. Because of the availability of online platforms and technical support to adult education and private university teachers prior to the pandemic, the challenges they faced when migrating to full online teaching were not as severe as those encountered by their public university counterparts. Understandably, because of the late provision of online platforms and the somewhat limited opportunities for the required training at the time of the survey, public university instructors were the ones who applied hybrid teaching the most.

Some of the sources of stress identified by the university educators from the three institution types in the present study were similar to those expressed by schoolteachers from different US
school boards in Ferguson, Frost and Hall (2012) study, namely workload, student behavior, and employment conditions. Ferguson et al. related those to negative occupational stress, depression, and anxiety. Even though student behavior was not among the challenges included by the participants of the present study, it was alluded to by several teachers in relation to students’ lack of motivation, especially when closing the camera and not interacting with the teacher. This is an interesting similarity despite the different contexts of the two studies.

The differences in the challenges faced by teachers from the three institution types in the present study could be explained in terms of context as a factor significantly impacting how they reacted to the same predicament. In public universities, teachers’ higher sense of challenge and lower levels of confidence and satisfaction could be explained in terms of the later introduction of full-fledged online teaching after securing a unified online platform (only at the end of the Fall term 2020-2021) due to the limited government funds required for securing institutional platforms for online teaching and providing the needed training and support. Add their worry about the time needed to learn how to use online platforms when they are equally accountable for teaching and research. This is because research in public universities is considered a priority as their promotion and job security depend highly on their research achievements along pre-assigned deadlines. This may explain their heightened sense of challenge when faced with the unforeseen acute need to transition to a new teaching mode with all the required training and the demands on their time.

In contrast, private university instructors already had online tools in place and received the necessary initial training in Spring 2019-2020. This led to a growing sense of confidence in general, which could explain their diminishing anxiety and increasing experience with online teaching tools, which seems to agree with Schaffhauser’s (2020) study of online teaching, although with a sample of schoolteachers. Therefore, they showed more satisfaction due to receiving early support and training. Further, most of them already had an online platform in place to supplement face-to-face teaching, and only had to rely on it entirely as they transitioned to full online teaching. Additionally, many appreciated saving the daily hours wasted otherwise on commuting to their campuses (especially as most Egyptian private universities are located in the outskirts of Cairo). On the other hand, they were highly challenged with the work-life balance due to longer student conferences and the sense of entitlement private university students had regarding the time they required of their teachers in return for the high fees they paid when they were only studying at home.

As for adult education teachers, mainly part-timers, they also had access to an online platform early on, in spring 2019/2020, and were offered online training at lockdown onset. They reportedly received more substantial administrative support and appreciation and, therefore, showed stronger motivation and resourcefulness in coping with the new situation. Those who relied solely on this part-time job probably faced the threat of job insecurity at a time when the job market may have been affected by prospects of economic stagnation. On the other hand, other adult education teachers had more than one teaching job at various institutions simultaneously. Those teachers indicated receiving more training from multiple workplaces, thus accumulating experience, and coping better and faster.
Teachers’ Coping Strategies

The present study has implications on the different types of coping strategies (namely, technical/professional, and social) used by teachers from different institution types. For instance, to cope with the internet connectivity challenges experienced by teachers of the three institution types, respondents teaching in adult education reported using extra bundles and devices. Maybe this strategy should be suggested to teachers in private and public universities who probably did not consider this option, coming from work environments with more stable internet connectivity. This would help them cope with the recent demands of streaming, downloading, and uploading, all of which require higher internet speed, larger bandwidth, and unlimited packages.

Among the professional coping strategies highly commended by the participants were watching online tutorials and forming communities of practice. Whenever using a new feature such as polls, discussion groups, breakout rooms, or online journals, many teachers reported seeking online tutorials to assist with the institutional training provided initially. Similarly, whenever they lacked adequate resources, teachers sought technical and professional help from friends and colleagues. The availability of audio-visual platforms facilitated the formation of such support groups who met regularly, exchanged tips and tricks on using the new media and/or on troubleshooting recurrent glitches.

As for the social coping strategies identified in the study, those included chatting with family and friends and using social media for caring and sharing, which shows compassion for self and others. This finding agrees with Talidong and Toquero (2020). They found using social media and spending time with family to be vital coping strategies practiced by Philippine teachers during the pandemic-related challenges, including the transition to online teaching. Our participants’ caring and sharing on social media as well as participating in professional communities of practice reportedly proved to be a robust support system the participants relied on to share concerns and seek advice.

Conclusion

The present study has compared teachers’ challenges and coping strategies in three institution types, aiming to enhance the teaching context in a changing world. Based on this comparison, the study could function as a means of awareness-raising to teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

Individual teachers probably need to anticipate that online instruction, whether fully or partially, may be the new norm that all involved in the field of education have to accept and be ready to engage in. By sharing experiences, teachers would learn useful tips that would help enhance their online performance. It is also hoped that teachers would adopt some coping strategies that have been reported to be effective by fellow teachers. The ultimate goal is to help make the “new normal” normal in the true sense of the word. Additionally, it is hoped that teachers seriously consider the gains they achieved from the new situation. One of these was the reported motivation to learn new skills related to online teaching. Another was a sense of increased productivity. It is predicted that, as time goes by, teachers will gain more experience
with online teaching, which will help diminish the challenges they face and equip them to cope more easily with the new reality.

Demands on administrators can also be suggested. Technical support of online platforms is evidently of paramount importance to help teachers operate and manage their day-to-day activities. Ongoing training is also needed to give them an edge in making the new reality work as smoothly as traditional teaching tools. Additionally, administrative support and appreciation of teachers are required to maintain teachers’ confidence and motivation while facing the demands of the changing situation. By demonstrating enough care and empathy, administrators would help enhance teachers’ well-being, and consequently, teaching and learning would take place in a more supportive environment.

The research also sheds light on the role of policymakers in planning, not only in Egypt where the study was conducted but in different parts of the world that have faced similar challenges. A contingency plan should be put in place in the event that a situation similar to that of Covid-19 should afflict the world. Short-term and long-term planning should include adequate internet services, reliable platforms suitable to each work environment, as well as round-the-clock technical support. Additionally, ongoing teacher-training programs on online tools (like Hassan et al.’s 2021 suggestion of providing training and orientation programs, through the collaborative efforts of educational institutions and relevant authorities) can help guarantee an effective learning process throughout the online experience with as few problems as possible.

Naturally, the present study suffered from a number of limitations that may restrict the generalizability of the findings reached. First, the sample size was limited due to having to run the survey twice. It was run first when piloting the survey (whose results were discarded), as explained in the methodology section above. When the same workplaces were approached to respond once again, some participants in the pilot may have declined, reluctant to spend more time on a voluntary task like this. Additionally, as with all surveys, the possibility of sampling error is always relevant when participation is voluntary. For instance, using predominantly female participants may have impacted the nature of the challenges and coping strategies reported. Including more Egyptian male teachers’ perceptions would have added value to the results, making them more representative of the population of Egyptian university teachers at large. Furthermore, when analyzing the survey results, it was discovered that some of the survey quantitative and commentary responses obtained from teachers could have benefited from further clarification and elaboration if interviews had been held with selected participants. However, any interview responses requested weeks after the survey would have reflected a different psychological reality when participants were probably coping better with online teaching due to familiarity, experience, training, and platform improvement.

The study, being based on a time-bound survey, functions as a snapshot, representing the reality at the time of the survey in an ever-changing situation. By the time this research is published, public universities have dedicated sufficient funds to subscribe to online platforms and provided the necessary training and technical support. Teachers have also developed a better grip on the use of online tools, are appreciated by students and the administration, and are said to be coping much better with a situation that was more challenging at the time of the survey. Such
changes are outside the scope of the present study and would merit further investigation.

Future research is suggested to seek more in-depth discussion of teachers’ attitudes through interviews and/or focus groups. This could explore the impact of the long duration of online teaching, especially after the situation has stabilized or even after the virus has mutated, which has pushed some academic institutions to resort to extending the online mode, and others to go back to face-to-face teaching. Such studies could use a larger sample size, including teachers from different geographical areas, demographic groups, and institution types. Further research could also study the correlation between instruction mode and level of stress, or the correlation between student-related variables like interaction, motivation and achievement, and teacher stress. It could also explore the impact of online teaching on students of different age groups. Such studies can help better understand the evolving integration of online learning and teaching as the new normal.

Acknowledgment
We would like to thank our colleague Sharon Elfarnawany for her feedback on a draft of this article. We are also grateful to our two colleagues, Amani Badawy and Nagwa Kassabgy, for validating the survey. We would also like to thank all the anonymous survey participants and colleagues who helped disseminate the survey. Without their help, time and effort, this research would have been impossible. All errors are ours.

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A Sociomaterial Perspective of the Challenges of Implementing the Communicative Approach in Saudi State Schools

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Received: 9/30/2021  Accepted: 11/15/2021  Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Despite its dominance in the field of teaching English as a second/foreign language, the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach continues to be challenging and problematic. A similar set of constraints – including but not limited to challenges related to educational cultures, contextual and conceptual factors, and lack of authentic materials and facilities – have been reported as factors hindering CLT implementations in many contexts. Language teaching and learning materials and facilities are crucial elements that have been found to affect communicative language teaching implementation. However, the issue of how those material elements can affect CLT implementation has rarely been the focus of research in CLT implementation studies. In this paper, the researcher examines the effect of language teaching and learning materials on teachers’ ability to teach communicatively. Thus, informed by sociomateriality this paper attends to a gap in the literature about how material elements of the curriculum hinder the implementation of the communicative language teaching approach in the Saudi context. The data examined in this study were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the findings indicated that material elements in the curriculum exerted agency and power, hindering teachers’ ability to teach communicatively and learners’ ability to improve their learning experiences. The report concludes with practical implications related to the complexity of curriculum development and implementation and the emergent nature of such processes as webs of entangled human/nonhuman relations that give rise to education.

Keywords: Actor-network theory, communicative language teaching approach, complexity theory, curriculum development, language teaching materials, sociomateriality

Introduction

Although Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is widely used, there are many reports in the literature indicating that CLT implementation in some EFL contexts has been and continues to be challenging and problematic (Bax, 2003; Didenko & Pichugova, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Several factors have been reported in the literature as to why CLT implementation into ESL/EFL contexts has proven to be a difficult task (see for example, Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Zhang, 2020 in China; Li, 1998 in South Korea; Karakas, 2013; Ozsevik, 2010 in Turkey; Alakrash, 2021 in Syria). Some propose that this problem is due to cultural and conceptual differences (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) – as CLT was born in and reflected a Western view of education (Holliday, 1994). However, the current paper illustrates a new perspective of understanding CLT challenges. This paper focuses on material use in CLT classrooms and addresses its relationship with micro-level (i.e., classroom practices) and macro-level (i.e., educational system and policies) challenges of implementing CLT in the Saudi context.

In summary, this paper addresses two concerns. The first is to engage in recent scholarly efforts to investigate language teaching and learning from a sociomaterial perspective. The second concern illustrates the challenges of implementing CLT into the Saudi educational context focusing on challenges that resonate with sociomaterial orientations. This paper addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do language teaching and learning materials affect CLT implementation in Saudi state schools?
2. How can sociomateriality extend scholarly efforts to examine curriculum implementation in valuable directions?

The following section addresses two key constructs in this study. The first examines the conceptual understanding of sociomateriality, sociomaterial orientations, and the concept of language teaching and learning materials. The second offers a brief definition of the Communicative Language Teaching approach and a review of its implementation in ESL/EFL contexts and Saudi Arabia.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Sociomateriality

Material elements in education (including but not limited to textbooks, technology, facilities, and resources) are usually dismissed or treated as background (Fenwick, Edwards & Sawchuk, 2011). However, from a sociomateriality point of view, these material assemblages can play a role in creating the reality of the educational phenomenon and stabilizing ways of producing centers of power (Fenwick & Doyle, 2018). Within this view, learning emerges through relations between teachers and learners on one end and materials in the classroom environment on the other end (Fenwick et al., 2011). Although empirical inquiry into how materials are used in language education has emerged, in recent years, as an innovative area of research (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018), the field is still understudied and undertheorized (Guerreitza, Engman & Matsumoto, 2021). Indeed, research into language classroom practices tends to study human aspects and linguistic systems rather than focusing on material and nonhuman aspects (Canagarajah, 2018; Toohey, 2019; Pennycook, 2018). According to Guerreitza et al. (2021), this might be due to the narrow conceptualization of the concept of
materials in the field of language learning and teaching, which tends to (a) overlook the complexities of how materials affect learners, teachers, language pedagogy and, language use within classroom settings; and (b) focus on only one type of materials (i.e., textbooks). Thus, this paper aims to illustrate how language teaching and learning materials go beyond such a shallow understanding. They can play an influential role in and strongly affect teaching and learning practices within the classroom.

Sociomateriality is an orientation that is present in diverse social science frameworks and an approach to educational research rather than a single unified theory (Fenwick et al., 2011). Sociomateriality draws on a myriad of theories and ontologies from a wide range of disciplines (Guerrettaz et al., 2021). Fenwick (2015) has asserted that sociomaterial perspectives to educational research have been influenced by many theoretical orientations – including complexity theory, actor-network theory, and others – that share the principal premise that there is no distinction between social phenomena and materiality. However, complexity theory is increasingly influencing educational research suggesting the examination of the dynamics of emergence within educational contexts (see Barad, 2007; Davis & Sumara, 2006; Fullan, 2003). Complexity theory as a materialist orientation is discussed later in this paper.

In the sphere of language education, sociomaterialism moves the field away from the proclivity toward linguistic exceptionalism (Canagarajah, 2018) – i.e., the tendency to prioritize structural language – towards acknowledging the significance of the numerous “polysemiotic resources in the social world” (Guerrettaz et al., 2021, p. 9) within language classrooms. Drawing on Fenwick’s (2010) conceptualization, the material – in this paper – includes tools, technologies, objects, and bodies as agentic actors not inherently distinct from humans as designers and users. Understanding language classrooms as a networked reality – where social and material elements are viewed as equal contributors to the network – is consistent with actor-network theory (Fenwick, 2015). This understanding – of material elements – challenges centering human consciousness and intention in teaching practices and foregrounds those material elements (Fenwick, 2010). Thus, from a sociomaterial perspective, educational research illustrates how materials actively impact teaching and learning practices and how educational processes are sociomaterial achievements (Fenwick, 2015). Actor-network theory is yet another sociomaterial orientation that will be addressed later in this paper.

According to Fenwick and Dahlgren (2015), emphasis has been placed on recognizing how material actors would move in practice and learning and relate to social actors in complex systems. As a result, a rich body of literature has arisen on how sociomaterializing educational processes could configure educational actors, showing possibilities for alternative ways to understand curriculum and different approaches to pedagogical interventions (Fenwick et al., 2011). This type of research can also help in highlighting how sociomaterial approaches to education might enrich our understanding of the enactment of education policies (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Fenwick & Landri, 2012). Thus, from this perspective, educational researchers could ask how different elements in the curriculum would act on one another to affect its implementation and how these interactions would produce different outcomes. Moreover, acknowledging that curricular change can be uncertain and unpredictable (Fullan, 2003) – as the system continuously adapts and changes patterns affecting practice (Fenwick & Dahlgren, 2015) – can raise some fundamental questions for educators. For example, educational researchers could...
ask questions such as: how would teaching practice be interconnected with and affected by articulated syllabus plans, and how can these plans make textbooks more powerful than teachers? How might educational reform dominated by pre-packaged and imported curricula inhibit its successful implementation? How could centralized educational systems affect attempts at educational reform? This paper aims to open the discussion to answer some of these questions.

Thus, sociomateriality enables educational inquiry to identify patterns of materiality in educational settings while simultaneously accounting for the frequently unpredictable dynamism of classrooms (Fenwick et al., 2011). Consequently, then, it breaks down any artificial boundaries between the material and social aspects of education by foregrounding the entangled interrelationships of the material world vis-à-vis social structures (Guerrettaz et al., 2021). Fenwick (2015), in the Sage Handbook of learning, has pointed out that sociomateriality enables educational researchers to consider systematic as well as unpredictable aspects of education. Through the sociomaterial lens, concepts such as students, teachers, learning activities and spaces, texts, pedagogy, and curriculum are understood as effects of heterogeneous relations rather than foundational categories or objects with distinct isolated properties. Therefore, sociomateriality can help illustrate what comprises learning and the dynamics that constitute education (Fenwick, 2010). Finally, Fenwick (2015) has suggested that sociomaterial perspectives offer approaches for understanding power relations within educational practices: not just how powerful webs become assembled but also how “to intervene, disturb or amplify those webs” (p. 84).

**Sociomaterial Orientations: Complexity Theory and Actor-Network Theory**

As mentioned above, there are numerous orientations to sociomateriality. However, two sociomaterial perspectives – complexity theory and actor-network theory – are selected for discussion in this paper. Complexity theory is derived from evolutionary biology and physics but has become increasingly influential in educational research (Fenwick, 2015). From a complexity theory orientation, teaching and learning are seen as emergent assemblages that create new transcendental unity of actions – resultant from changes in the social and material elements in the system comprising them and in which they participate – that could not have been achieved independently (Fenwick, 2010). As a result, one could assume that, from a complexity theory perspective, teaching and learning could not be organized according to externally imposed blueprints – e.g., syllabus distribution plans and policies imposed from the top – in hierarchical managerial systems. But, rather educational practices should be inclusively treated as unpredictable to maintain sustainable, effective teaching and learning practices.

From an actor-network theory perspective, teaching and learning practices – seen as a joint exercise within networks performed through nonhuman and human beings - are performed in assembling and maintaining networks (Fenwick, 2010). This perspective is linked explicitly to the politics – i.e., power relations – through which practices – e.g., teachers’ adherence to textbooks – come to be assembled and extend to translate the identities and behaviors of each actor in the system – e.g., textbooks, teachers, etc. Thus, From an actor-network theory lens (see, for example, Braidotti, 2013; Latour, 2005), educational research illustrates how do educational practices – such as testing and performativity and accountability procedures – and objects – such as textbooks – become stabilized as powerful assemblages that can limit, enhance or disrupt teaching processes and possibilities of learning.
However, it is pertinent to point out here that although actor-network theory and complexity theory might be derived from different theoretical roots, Fenwick et al. (2011) has indicated that they bear some significant resemblances. Both approaches explore the webs of entangled human/nonhuman actions that give rise to educational systems. Both perspectives conceptualize knowledge as emerging – simultaneously with material elements – “in webs of interconnections between heterogeneous entities, human and nonhuman” (Fenwick, 2010, p. 106). Therefore, as sociomaterial approaches, both can invite those in the sphere of education to consider the material aspects of schooling (technologies, materials, resources) that might exert forces and might be entangled with what would appear to be a human intention, engagement and change by focusing on how can agency be distributed across people, technology, and things (Landri, 2015).

Conceptualizing Language Teaching and Learning Materials within Sociomaterialism

In the contemporary era of language education, teachers and learners have access to a wide array of language learning tools, apps, websites, and content with numerous tasks and activities designed to enhance and accelerate teaching and learning processes (Thorne, Hellermann & Jakonen, 2021). Nevertheless, there is a small body of research concerned with investigating additional language education materials from a sociomaterial perspective (Guerrettaz et al., 2021). Harwood (2014) has categorized research on teaching materials in TESOL into a three-way classification as follows: material content (analyzing textbooks outside the classroom context); material consumption (examining how teachers and learners use textbooks), and material production (concerned with how textbooks are designed and distributed). The current paper falls under the material consumption level of Harwood’s (2014) categories. Yet, this paper would broaden the concept of materials to go beyond textbooks – as described in Harwood’s (2014) classification – to the use of everything teachers and learners use to make English learning more efficient – including but not limited to textbooks and teacher-designed worksheets (Harwood, 2021).

In this paper, the concept of language materials is understood as an entangled – i.e., the interrelationship between human and nonhuman elements (see Fenwick, 2015) – and emergent – i.e., generated and recognized through interaction between social and material actors (see Barad, 2007) – assemblage – i.e., heterogonous gathering of polysemiotic elements (see Toohey, 2019) – of different entities that exert power, influence, and agency in the language classroom context. Understanding language teaching and learning materials from a sociomaterial perspective, this paper draws on Guerrettaz et al.’s (2021) empirically based – drawing on seven empirical classroom-based studies of materials use in language education – definition of materials. Guerrettaz et al. (2021) have defined language materials as:

“(a) physical entities, (b) texts, (c) environments, (d) signs, and (e) technologies within the perceptual field of the learner(s) or teacher(s); these are used with the ultimate intention of facilitating [language learning and teaching] and in some sort of principled way” (p. 11).

The five categories described in the definition mentioned above include materials – such as textbooks, prints, whiteboards, images, words, gestures, digital and online resources, classrooms, PowerPoint slides, smartphone apps, projectors, tablets, Internet, Wi-Fi, and laptop computers – that do not fit into just one single category but rather involve two or more (Guerrettaz et al.,
meaning each assemblage is more than one and less than many, not a multiplicity of bits nor a plurality (Law, 1999, as cited in Fenwick, 2015). For example, an app on a smartphone or tablet is both a virtual environment and a technology installed on a physical entity (i.e., the smartphone or tablet). According to Thorne et al. (2021), using language teaching and learning materials (such as mobile phones) can provide opportunities for second language (L2) learners to cooperate and communicate together and with their environment. The study has illustrated that “communicative action is multimodal, embodied, and embedded in material environments that catalyze action among a heterogeneous array of humans and nonhumans.” (p. 120). Thus, human actions such as verbal communication are used systematically to achieve and maintain intersubjectivity, and more importantly, those actions are entangled with nonhuman elements to produce the social.

The following section will briefly discuss CLT, its tenets, and its implementation challenges in EFL/ESL contexts. I do so because the second concern of this paper is to examine CLT challenges in the Saudi educational context from a sociomaterial perspective.

The Implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach

The best way to define CLT and understand it as an approach might be through understanding its core principles. Brown (2014) identifies four interconnected characteristics of CLT as a direct and straightforward definition. First, within CLT, classroom goals are not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence. Secondly, organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects that enable learners to use language for meaningful purposes. The third characteristic distinguishing CLT from previous language teaching approaches is that fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. In other words, priority may be given to fluency rather than accuracy to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use. Finally, in a communicative classroom, authenticity is key, in which students use the language productively and receptively in unrehearsed contexts. Brown (2007) suggests that authenticity of communication often makes it difficult for novice and non-native speaking teachers, who are not very proficient in the target language, to teach effectively as drills, rehearsed exercises, and discussions (in the first language) of grammatical rules seem much more manageable. Brown (2007) notes, however, that such a drawback should not deter communicative goals in the classroom, in which technology can come to the aid of such teachers. This means that language teaching and learning materials are fundamental parts of teaching practices within communicative classrooms, especially in EFL/ESL contexts where teachers and learners might be non-English speakers. Therefore, teaching materials can be seen as equal contributors to the network that assemble and reassemble to generate and constitute communicative practices.

Due to several factors, including a mismatch between some CLT underlying principles and some EFL/ESL educational contexts, empirical evidence has shown that its implementation has proven to be a challenging task (see, for example, Ahmad & Rao, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2011 in China and East Asia; Vasilopoulos, 2008 in Korea; Chowdhry, 2003 in Bangladesh). Therefore, a great deal of the research studies that have investigated CLT implementation into EFL contexts reports, almost always, a very similar set of constraints, including class sizes, schedules, lack of resources and equipment (Zhang, 2020; Fang, 2010 in China; Li, 1998 in South
Korea; Karakas, 2013; Ozsevik, 2010 in Turkey; Alakrash, 2021 in Syria) that hinder its implementation.

In terms of constraints related to limited resources and insufficient language teaching and learning materials (Butler, 2011), several observational studies in the Asian context (Mahmadun Nubyy et al., 2020 in Bangladesh; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008 in Thailand) report those as constraints hindering CLT implementation. In the Saudi context, Al-Mohanna (2010) and Alzaidi (2011) report that Saudi EFL teachers’ practices are restricted by the high-density textbooks with insufficient time to teach the textbook from cover to cover, lack of adequate teaching/learning resources, and inadequate examination systems. In summary, the nature of teaching and learning materials and lack of sufficient resources are some of the overarching factors hindering CLT implementation in some EFL/ESL contexts. Therefore, invoking a sociomaterial perspective to understand their role in enhancing or hindering CLT implementation is one of the concerns of this paper. As the findings presented in this paper demonstrate how defining materials from a sociomaterial perspective might be influential in any attempts to successful curriculum implementation.

Even though teaching materials—such as textbooks, facilities, and technological resources—are central elements of communicative language teaching, the issue of how materials can affect CLT implementation has rarely been the focus of research in CLT implementation studies. Thus, the emphasis on CLT challenges from a sociomaterial perspective represents a gap in the literature this paper attends to by examining how materials use shape language teaching and learning environments, in general, and communicative classrooms, in particular. Moreover, this paper engages in the most recent theoretical advancements in the field of language education (Guerrettaz et al., 2021), which have advanced posthumanist (Pennycook, 2018) and materialist (Canagarajah, 2018; Toohey, 2019) orientations highlighting the complexity of meaning-making processes involving materiality within language instructional contexts. Therefore, this paper responds to calls for research on teaching materials to appreciate the complexity of the role that instructional materials play in the broader educational context (Harwood, 2021). Consequently, it addresses what Sørensen (2009) refers to as a “blindness toward the question of how educational practice is affected by materials” (p. 2). In doing so, this paper engages with the argument made by The Douglas Fir Group (2016), advocating the need for new interdisciplinary perspectives and new aims for the 21st-century in the field of applied linguistics so that it “can investigate the learning and teaching of an additional language and the social-local worlds of learners” (p. 20). These new perspectives entail raising questions about language education stimulated from materialist, posthumanist (Toohey, 2019), and sociomaterialist perspectives.

**Methods**

This paper draws from an exploratory interpretive study. The purpose of the study was to identify and describe Saudi primary EFL teachers’ perspectives of CLT challenges they were facing to understand the well-reported unsatisfactory CLT implementation in the Saudi Arabian context (Bahanshal, 2013). Although the original study collected data from qualitative and quantitative methods, the findings discussed in the current paper were strictly generated from the qualitative strand. Therefore, to maintain the focus of this paper, the methods addressed below are qualitative ones only.
Participants
The sample of the study included 15 Saudi female EFL teachers in state primary schools. Six of the participants in the sample participated in both the interviews and classroom observation sessions. A snowball sampling technique was used to gain access to the participants. Once a group of individuals who either had access to or were Saudi EFL teachers at the primary level themselves, those individuals were used as informants who recruited more participants for the study. Due to time and distance constraints and administrative complications, 12 of the participants – for classroom observations in particular – were from urban and rural areas in a major city in Saudi Arabia. As for the remaining three, one was from a different town in the same region, and the other two were teaching in a rural governorate in a different region. A snowball sampling technique was utilized to recruit the participants in the study sample (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

Research Instruments
Classroom observations
Unstructured classroom observations were used as a supplementary source of data. A non-rating schedule was used to collect handwritten notes during the observation sessions, as it was not my intention to evaluate teachers’ behaviors inside the classroom. The purpose was to capture how EFL teachers were or were not able to implement CLT into their practice and to gain insights into the reality of primary EFL classrooms. The observation schedule was designed to comply with the exploratory nature of the project, to capture any unanticipated critical factors and significance of the context, and to catch any context-specific challenges. The observational data gathered deepened my understanding of CLT challenges EFL teachers faced and informed the line of questioning later in the individual interviews. All in all, ten female teachers in nine state primary schools out of the thirteen schools visited were observed, and a total of 17 classroom observation sessions of English lessons at the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades were conducted. A total of around 13 hours of classroom time was observed, in which each observation session lasted between 35 to 45 minutes.

Interviews
To explore and deeply understand Saudi EFL teachers’ perceptions of CLT challenges in their day-to-day teaching practices, individual semi-structured interviews were utilized. The aim was to understand how primary EFL teachers perceived and constructed their social and professional realities. In total, 11 Saudi female teachers, six of whom were from the classroom observations sample, were interviewed. As for the rest, they were recruited through the snowball sampling technique – two were from a rural area in the southern region, one from another city, one was teaching in an afternoon school, and the last one was from the same urban city where the data were collected but from outside the observation sample. Due to distance issues and participants’ hesitance to have their voice recorded, the interviews were conducted online through instant messaging (IM) – via WhatsApp messenger. The questions in the interview schedule were adapted based on the initial analysis of trends in the questionnaire data and the notes from the classroom observation sessions.

Data Analysis
Due to the exploratory nature of this study, Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory approach was adopted as an analytical framework (Cohen et al., 2018). According to
Stebbins (2011), exploration and grounded theory would usually be mentioned together because both depend on an inductive line of thinking. Since the semi-structured interviews were the primary data source in this study, six main themes emerged from analyzing the interviewing data. To reflect the complexity of the data, data from the questionnaire and classroom observations were integrated — where applicable — as supporting evidence under each of the research procedures.

Findings

The findings presented in this paper represent only two themes of the six that emerged in the original study. Namely, the findings addressed here are those related to syllabus, resources, and teaching facilities — i.e., CLT challenges that invoked sociomaterality.

Syllabus Related Challenges

The majority of teachers in the sample expressed concerns about teaching materials (including the syllabus, textbooks, and supplementary materials provided with the textbook). Teachers in the interview sample expressed concerns about the articulated nature of the syllabus, which restricted their autonomy and limited their ability to teach communicatively. The overwhelming majority of interviewees used words such as ‘heavy’, ‘articulated’, ‘long’, ‘demanding’, and ‘knowledge-packed’, to describe the syllabus.

These particular challenges were observed during classroom observations. Given that all observations were conducted over the same period (sometimes observing two teachers in two different schools on the same day), it was noticeable that teachers of the same grade were teaching the same page or part of the lesson in every school. Similarly, it was noticeable in all observation sessions that teachers had to rush through activities and tasks to cover a certain number of pages in the textbook. Thus, in observation session #9, the teacher was asked about the issue. She explained that by the beginning of each semester, supervisors — from the General Directorate of Education — would send each EFL teacher a very articulated syllabus distribution plan, in which lessons are assigned to specific dates on the calendar so that all teachers would be teaching the same lesson on the same day nationwide. She also explained that if the teacher missed a day either for in-service training or for personal reasons, then she would be obligated to find the time to catch up with the syllabus distribution plan.

These findings indicated that the articulated nature of the syllabus forced teachers to rely more on textbooks, which is inconsistent with CLT principles. Unlike other more traditional language teaching methodologies, CLT — in the context of foreign language teaching — is described as calling for the gradual move from textbooks as principal determiners of the language syllabus towards the use of authentic texts selected by the teachers and learners (Pachler, 2000). This finding is consistent with those of Rahmatuzzaman (2018), who has indicated that one of the critical difficulties of implementing CLT is teachers’ formal teaching that seems to have more contextual attachment to completing the syllabus than teaching to support communication. This reliance on textbooks and pressure on teachers to strictly do what the textbook instructs them to do might lead to ineffective language teaching and learning. Accordingly, teachers would not have the time to use communicative activities and learners would not have the opportunity to develop their communicative competence. As a result, the communicative goals of the curriculum would not be attained.
From the lens of sociomateriality, these findings suggest that textbooks can exert power and agency by forcing teachers to adhere to and adjust their practice to align it with the mandated syllabus distribution plan (Fenwick et al., 2011) even when they were clearly struggling with time. According to Fenwick (2015), materials – textbooks in this case – can permit and/or prevent actions, convey knowledge, and become powerful. Thus, in this case, the textbook is playing a performative role, acting together with other elements – in the classroom, including teachers and students – to exclude, invite, change and regulate teaching and learning practices. Thus, materials here wield power by shaping action, conveying knowledge, and collaborating with other social and material elements in the classroom context (Guerrettaz et al., 2021). Yet, sometimes materials can hinder teaching and learning and confound teachers and learners (Miller, 2012). The point here is that the findings indicate that textbook and syllabus distribution plans mandated on Saudi EFL teachers seem more powerful than teachers hindering their ability to implement CLT and deemed their job challenging.

**Challenges Related to Limited Resources and Teaching Facilities**

The overwhelming majority of interviewees were particularly critical of the limited resources, students’ lack of access to appropriate language learning materials, and proper up-to-date educational technology equipment. In all cases, both in the interviewing and observation samples, EFL teachers remarked that it was essential to have an English lab in each school to teach English communicatively. The following excerpt from the interviews illustrates teachers’ perspectives on this particular issue:

> From my point of view – and I taught English at all levels - quite frankly, all our [EFL teachers] troubles come down to two core problems limited time and the discouraging environment in our classrooms that does not help appropriate CLT implementation. In my opinion, this can only be solved by assigning an English learning lab equipped with all the resources we need to teach the four language skills appropriately. (Teacher1)

Even teachers in the classroom-observation sample alluded to the notion of an English lab and the magnitude of its effect on their teaching practice. Based on data generated from classroom observations, teachers expressed their frustration about the lack of proper facilities and the discouraging classroom environment. Concerns were also expressed about teachers’ and students’ lack of access to the internet in schools. Free access to Wi-Fi in states schools is restricted to administrative staff only. Thus, teachers are not given the right to access the school’s Wi-Fi, not even for teaching purposes. Talking about this issue, one interviewee said:

> “The challenge for me as a teacher is the lack of internet access” (Teacher2)

This issue also arose in discussions about students’ backgrounds, especially in underprivileged parts of the city and rural areas. For example, during the pre and post-observation talks with teachers, especially in schools located in disadvantaged communities of the city and schools located in rural areas, they alluded to the notion of students’ inability to access the internet.

> Teachers’ unanimous interest in providing more up-to-date resources for EFL instruction should not be surprising, especially given the ever-increasing roles that digital media play in every aspect of professional and social domains. Overall, research evidence has taken a favorable stance towards the pedagogical use of information and communication technology in Saudi EFL
classrooms and its potential benefits for learners’ engagement, autonomy, and improving their communicative skills (Toro et al., 2019). In accordance with the present findings, previous studies have identified; limited access to suitable equipment and the Internet as obstacles to proper use of digital technologies in EFL instruction (Al-Maini, 2013; Picard, 2019).

These findings invoke sociomateriality and the semiotic relationship between social and material elements in language education contexts. As explained before, material elements in education (including facilities and resources) are usually dismissed or treated as background. However, from a sociomaterialistic point of view, the roles these material assemblages play in creating the reality of the educational phenomenon and how these assemblages become stabilized and durable in ways of producing centers of power are acknowledged (Fenwick & Doyle, 2018). The findings indicate that from EFL teachers’ perspectives, it is not possible to separate effective CLT implementation from technological resources and up-to-date facilities. Teachers’ views in this regard show how the existence of facilities and teaching/learning resources (or lack thereof) is participating and creating particular effects on the implementation of the communicative approach into their practice. The findings imply that both elements are entangled and indeterminately connected and that if one is taken out it would not be effective standing alone. Thus, the findings imply that in CLT implementation, there is no distinction between teaching practice (i.e., the social element) and the use of resources and facilities (i.e., the material components).

Discussion

This section will answer the research questions of the study and interpret the findings. Therefore, the section is organized according to the two questions of the study.

Q1: To what extent do language teaching and learning materials affect CLT implementation in Saudi state schools?

This study has produced findings that corroborate previous studies that suggested that material elements can exert agency and power in curriculum development and implementation (Fenwick et al., 2011; Landri, 2015). For example, the findings indicated that textbooks, teaching/learning resources, and materials hindered effective CLT implementation. Therefore, it might be helpful to invoke complexity theory and actor-network theory to make sense of these findings. Through this lens, curriculum implementation might be understood as continuous and recursive interactions, produced through relations amongst action and interaction, material elements, social elements, and structural dynamics. Within this view, teaching and learning can be seen as a joint exercise of relational strategies performed by both inanimate (such as textbooks, materials, technology) and animate beings (i.e., teachers and learners) in the classroom. The importance of understanding curriculum development as a complex system might arise because its emergence would only be enabled within educational systems characterized by diversity, decentralization, redundancy, open constraints, and feedback (Johnson, 2001).

Viewing communicative language teaching implementation from a sociomaterial perspective can be beneficial for second language educators. It can help them understand how material elements can influence – limit or enhance teachers’ abilities to effectively and meaningfully use communicative activities – language teaching and learning practices. Additionally, this perspective has the potential to shift instructional practices from seeking predictability and control towards understanding teaching and learning as emergent and
unpredictable systems (Fullan, 2003). Understanding language teaching materials through a sociomaterial lens implies that language teaching materials are not teacher/learner-proof (Harwood, 2021). Thus, the message that needs to filter through here is that material use is an unpredictable practice because teachers and learners may react to and engage with materials differently. Therefore, sociomateriality helps policymakers, curriculum designers, teachers’ trainers, and teachers understand that materials cannot be guaranteed to achieve the outcomes they were intended to attain or be as pedagogically effective as their designers anticipated.

**Q2: How can sociomateriality extend scholarly efforts to examine curriculum implementation in valuable directions?**

The findings of this study indicated that failure to acknowledge the importance of language teaching and learning materials could only lead to ineffective implementation of curriculum changes. The participants suggested that the lack of an English lab, for example, was an obstacle that stood in the way of teaching communicatively. Thus, the findings have several implications related to the complexity of curriculum implementation processes. In accordance with the present findings, previous studies have demonstrated that the processes of curriculum development and implementation go beyond “stuffing more activities into crowded curricula” (Fenwick, 2015, p. 91). Understanding curriculum development from this perspective would call for viewing reform as an emergence where the end result would be more than the sum of its parts and therefore not predictable from the ground from which it emerged (Fenwick et al., 2011). Fullan (2003) has suggested that the process of educational change should be understood as uncontrollable and unpredictable, as such an understanding would allow using key complexity concepts to design and guide more powerful educational systems. Thus, approaching curriculum development and implementation from this view would call for inclusivity and equity in leadership roles, where all stakeholders, including human and nonhuman elements, would collaborate to implement more profound and sustainable educational reform.

**Conclusion**

This paper addressed the challenges of implementing the communicative approach in Saudi state schools from a sociomaterial perspective. The findings indicated that teaching materials such as the textbook exerted power and agency, affecting teachers’ ability to teach communicatively. Teachers in the sample showed that lack of proper language teaching facilities and resources was one of the main challenges of implementing the communicative approach in the Saudi state schools. Viewing communicative language teaching from a sociomaterial perspective can be beneficial for second language educators as it can help them understand how material elements can influence – limit or enhance teachers’ abilities to effectively and meaningfully use communicative activities – language teaching and learning.

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A Need for a Substantive Change in Tertiary EFL Education

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Received: 8/14/2021 Accepted: 10/29/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
As Saudi Arabia is increasing its international influence and educational collaboration at a global scale, promoting the importance of English language teaching and learning in basic and tertiary education has been more prioritized in the country. Diverse programs are offered in universities, incorporating foundation year programs and curricula, which have become a must for anyone passionate about his/her future, and a strategic necessity for any university that aims at preparing its graduates for their career life. This paper investigates the birth of one of the newest approaches in EFL curriculum design that tries to re-launch the link between labor markets and demands of academic requirements, global society, on the one hand, and the learners’ needs on the other hand, and questions the opinions of foundation year students who completed one academic year of the newly launched curriculum in an English Language Institute at a Saudi public university, data collection employed a large-scale survey (n = 2000) that purposefully explores the students’ opinion on the new curriculum. Results obtained from 371 respondents reveal students’ satisfaction toward a clear improvement in their language skills, specifically presentation, vocabulary, and writing, and joint agreement that the course was autonomy supportive. It was also significant that the course increased the students’ intrinsic motivation and appreciation of the challenges and inspiration this curriculum had given to them. This paper is an extended piece of knowledge for further research. It provides an illustration of students’ deep thoughts on their target language needs for policymakers and curriculum designers to consider.

Keywords: autonomy, curriculum, eclectic, tertiary EFL, outcomes, survey, syllabus

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.21
Introduction

In the Saudi higher education system, textbooks function as the main components of the English curriculum for foundation year students. Selected authorized foreign publishers, who possess a ready-made systematic syllabus for language instructors to follow, usually design books and readers. Such one-size-fits-all books and texts shape the curriculum and lead to more competitive publishers who continue to pursue more space in providing adequate language educational materials.

With the dominant business of publishers of English textbooks, local EFL curriculum development is an area of research that has not been given sufficient attention in the Saudi higher education and specifically in English education for foundation year programs in many public universities. Such practices urge us, as discussed by Tanaka (2012), to examine the curriculum development approaches and reexamine how teachers in the language education field perform their roles whether they transmit curriculum, develop curriculum, or make curriculum. He also illustrated that some tertiary institutions usually outsource their English programs to special schools and bodies, creating a perception that EFL education is not a built-in component of university education or it is strictly specialized and hard to design by internal bodies. More questions arise such as: does the designed curriculum meet students’ needs? Does it meet labor demands and the ambition of academic departments? Are we convinced of the one-size-fits-all textbooks which the publishers compete to provide? Are decision-makers and curriculum leaders still at a muddy point where no profound comprehension of the difference between curriculum and textbooks? What objectives foundation year English programs should uphold? And finally, as questioned by Tanaka (2012), which are the best approaches to curriculum and instructional design that will produce English language proficient users who can fulfill their needs of communication in a globally changing world.

Curriculum development/improvement is no longer a solo process of executing that curriculum, but as elaborated by Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt (1992), “a process of growth for teachers and students, a change in thinking and practice” (p.428). The teacher plays many roles throughout the process of creating the curriculum such as utilizing supplementary materials, creating and renovating new parts of the curriculum. The creative “enactment” approach also argued by the two researchers in which teachers and their students share their roles in creating their curriculum.

Research question

The main research question for this paper lies at the core of investigating the students’ opinion on the newly launched curriculum in an English Language Institute at a Saudi public university. As such, the primary interrogation of this paper is explored with the support of several sub-questions that cover areas such as rating the student’s progress, rating the most improved skills, rating the most skills that need improvement, rating which skills are the easiest, rating which skills are the most difficult, illustrating the distinctive features of the new curriculum, describing the overall experience, and recommendations.
Research significance

This paper is intended to provide a better view of preparing global citizens of the future in Saudi Arabia to master communicative competence in the 21st century through English programs offered in universities foundation year tracks. With a description of the newly launched and implemented curriculum as the EFL program for foundation year students at the English Language Institute of a Saudi public tertiary institution, this paper explores the students’ opinion on their experience throughout the academic year they spent in studying English. Although it is unknown what results in a similar exploration conducted previously, the survey results in this paper with its examination of the syllabus for the newly launched foundation year EFL course show a fantastic diversity and thoughtful concerns among students in how EFL is taught and learned.

Literature Review

There are growing demands for accountability in public life, with education a particularly urgent case and foreign language education a prime example within it (Long, 2005). The majority of foundation year university students with academic, occupational, and survival needs for second language competency, functional L2 proficiency, as well as academic departments, are usually dissatisfied with language programs and instructional practices that are irrelevant to those needs. In contrast, all courses and programs of all kinds and areas must be relevant to the students’ needs and outer world behind classroom walls. Instead of a one-size-fits-all curriculum, it is urgent and demanding to look at language programs as programs that are designed for particular purposes for particular people in specific contexts.

EFL Curriculum design and development approaches depend on many theories and principles. However, significant components of curriculum development remain crucial and inevitable such as needs and environment analysis, principles, goals, sequencing, presentation model, assessment, evaluation, and synchronized professional development. As described by Macalister and Nation (2019), the plans of a course mainly direct the needs analysis. It examines what the learners know already and what they need to know. For decades, educators and researchers have argued that the basic approach to education strives to meet unique and fundamental human needs and develop human potential (Patterson, 2003). For example, William Glasser (1990), creator of choice theory and Quality Schools, has maintained that we will not have more motivated students who work harder and learn more, nor will we have lower dropout rates until we create more need-satisfying schools. Needs analysis is a process of assessment and thus can be validated by examining its reliability, validity, and practicality and assuring that the course will contain authentic and valuable things to learn. When reaching principles, Macalister and Nation (2019) mentioned that they must be general enough to allow variety and flexibility in their application to suit the wide range of conditions in which language is taught. Such principles cover curriculum sequencing, presentation model, assessment, and evaluation. With all such principles, it is now entirely clear that teaching grammar and random vocabulary is no longer a sufficient practice. Elaborated by Finney (2002), language is a tool for communication. In that sense, we need must design classes that prepare students to become effective communicators and users of the language in many meaningful and varied contexts. Learners nowadays are urged to learn how to learn and maintain continuous learning dispositions where learner-centered model and facilitation of accepting change prevail in rapidly changing and innovative educational systems. Curriculum development from the side of teachers identifies other perspectives. As described by Sulaiman, Ayub, and Sulaiman (2015), “implementing the new curriculum could be
A Need for a Substantive Change in Tertiary EFL Education

Aburizaizah

Facets of rapid, and demanding changes in education are the inclusion of thinking and presentation skills in curricula. Many research indicates that the traditional way of teaching does not support teachers in promoting thinking skills (Ennis, 1990; Swartz & Perkins, 1989; Haynes, 2002) and since these skills require openness, autonomy, and reflection on learning (Wilson & Murdoch, 2008), the materials provided should encourage these qualities in the learner (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011). With regard to presentation (speaking) skills, it is commonly unpleasant that the high school English curriculum puts too much emphasis on official tests (university admission tests at the expense of communication skills. Presentation skills are essential for students in tertiary education, however, and due to the fact that most students focus on final exams and also due to the crowded nature of classrooms in the past, presentation skills have been the least tackled language proficiency skill. Many factors that contribute to students’ reluctance towards playing active roles in speaking activities, such as a study by Gaudart (1992) where he claimed that some teachers attribute learners’ passiveness in the classroom discussions to lack of motivation.

Amirian and Tavakoli (2016) have indicated that while accessible speaking and presentation are so significant in study contexts, many learners in tertiary contexts avoid speaking and presenting because of their low self-efficacy. Two modes of Bandura’s (1995), examined by the two authors. They conducted a self-efficacy comparison during presentations in English among two groups of EFL learners and non-EFL learners. They also managed to explore the relationship between these two constructs. With the results they obtained, university curricula must include more presentation-based activities and tasks. Another more recent study provided by Barrett, Liu and Wang (2020), and concerned with seamless learning for oral presentations reveals an obvious need among students for more training on related to language production such as designing expressions, language structures, and body language to enhance their performance. While focusing on the importance of thinking and presentation skills in EFL curricula, numerous research and curriculum development plans have emphasized the demanding needs and advantages of teaching each primary language skill comprehensively, and these skills include listening, reading, speaking, and writing along with the significant structure knowledge gained from grammar and vocabulary.

Methodology

Context

The concerned English Language Institute of this paper has been established in the academic year 2010/2011. It seeks to be a renowned and respected center of academic and educational excellence that performs its mission and educational role in a manner befitting its host university. The Institute programs are open to all foundation year students. They raise their level of English language proficiency to facilitate their subsequent academic careers within the various university specializations and, with its newly developed curriculum, provide learners with enriching courses in language that develop their communication and thinking skills.
Participants

While qualified faculty trained explicitly in language instruction have been leading the program, the participants’ community of this paper represent the enrolled students who reflect a student body primarily consists of high school graduates entirely from the local province. The number of newly admitted full-time students during the launching of the new curriculum varies depending on seat availability at the university. Data for this paper has come from around 1000 students at the women’s campus, and 1,000-1,500 at the men’s campus, with a total number of 370 students from the two campuses responding to the research tool. Participants who participated and were admitted into the university were required to sit for a placement test to begin the English course. However, students who earned a band score of 5.5 on the IELTS exam or a 59 on the internet-based TOEFL (IBT) are eligible for exemption from enrolling in the English program.

Research Tools

The current descriptive study grounds its argument based upon the theoretical notions of a quantitative/qualitative research paradigm. The newly developed EFL curriculum consists of a syllabus that follows a 14-week course pacing guides delivered to foundation year students (males and females) as part of their EFL program at the university. With a general aim towards measuring the influence of this curriculum on students’ learning, a two-fold survey was structured and distributed online to students consisting of 9 questions (six closed-ended and three open-ended) as follows:

- Rate your progress from one to 10?
- Which skill has most improved?
- Which skill do you think you still need to improve?
- Which skill is the easiest in the ELI program?
- Which skill is the most difficult?
- Describe the change in your level before and after studying at the ELI?
- What makes the new curriculum distinctive?
- What recommendations and suggestions do you offer to enhance the new curriculum in the future?
- Summarize your experience throughout your study of this curriculum.

The Curriculum

The new curriculum adopts a backward design, as described by Richards (2013), in which detailed learning outcomes mark the beginning of the developed curriculum, then followed by selecting the teaching methods and syllabus design. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is a recent example of backward design.

The intensive English language course is a required course in the Foundation Year Program. The course design provides language instruction beginning at a B1 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and exiting at C1 level, which is within the band of being an independent user. These CEFR levels corresponded with a range of 4-6 on Canadian Language Benchmarks and are marked as an intermediate proficiency level. The program, led by qualified faculty trained explicitly in language instruction. Enrollment of students reflects a student body that primarily consists of high school graduates almost entirely come from the local province. The number of newly admitted full-time students during
the launching of the new curriculum varies depending on seat availability at the university. Still, they were around 1000 students at the women’s campus and 1,000-1,500 at the men’s campus. Students admitted into the university must sit for a placement test to begin the English course. However, students who earned a band score of 5.5 on the IELTS exam or a 59 on the internet-based TOEFL (IBT) are eligible for exemption from enrolling in the English program.

The course at the Institute targets the development of the person as a whole using a curriculum and instructional methods that are argued and named by Professor Brown (1995) as an "eclectic approach". He illustrated how language program developers could choose among multiple contents and instructional strategies that are better designed and customized according to specific students in specific situations so that each learner – as a whole – is treated as a unique person. He also claims that approaching curriculum through this eclectic method guarantees more freedom and flexibility to instructors to design their pedagogical practices around the needs and levels of their students. The diverse classroom instruction—focuses on eight core areas of language skills, as illustrated in table one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Core skill areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strands of Language Learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning-Focused Input</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning-Focused Output</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluency Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language-Focused Learning</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note 1. Adopted from Nation (1996, p. 7)*

These eight areas organize and focus the goals, content, and learning outcomes (SLOs). They coherently build skills from level one to level two. Furthermore, the program provides an extended educational experience that targets the 5.5 bands in the IELTS.

**Curriculum Plan**

When the Institute created the curriculum development plan, it aimed to be relevant to the students’ minds and around a broad spectrum of up-to-date and authentic contexts. A needs analysis conducted on all campuses of the Institute in order to identify the reasons why many students who are enrolled in the foundation year fail academically even after studying in intensive classes of English. Several procedures, mainly interviews, observations, and questionnaires, were used to gather information about the needs of the students and desired to learn outcomes. The course learning outcomes of English skills tried to respond to what is known as students’ areas of most significant difficulty and greatest needs and lacks. Leaders of academic departments participated in interviews to determine significant skills that students lack when they pursue their academic degrees. A variety of learning outcomes that were drawn primarily from trusted benchmarks makers and frameworks, were used. The course is constructed successfully in helping students learn how to communicate more effectively and functionally in a variety of settings of various topics.
On that basis, the Institute had built its approach to the English program. The Institute adopted policies and approaches to connect students and teachers to the broader contexts and situations such as functional use of the language, encouraging students to engage in different modes of communication culture and societies, thus leading students to produce meaningful output and embark meaning negotiation and looking at the outer world from different perspectives. The ELI curriculum has two levels coded as 110 and 120. Level 110 aims to develop student language proficiency beginning at a B1 level on the Common European Framework (CEFR), moving into the B2 level on the CEFR, within the band of an independent user. The main objective of level 120 is to expand student language aptitude, moving from B2 level on the CEFR to C1 level. The students will acquire the necessary learning strategies along with critical thinking skills, presentations skills, and sub-skills. Students could develop the essential learning techniques to take part in deliberations and discourse with classmates. Hence, the students will build confidence for independent learning throughout their university career. Table two illustrates the program structure.

Table 2. Course structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELI 110</th>
<th>ELI 120</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program level</td>
<td>(CEFR-B1-B2) = (CLB 4-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks per level</td>
<td>14 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Hours</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Hours/week</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online hours</td>
<td>4 per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry level</td>
<td>CEFR (B1) CLB (1-2-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit level</td>
<td>B2 IELTS 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course value</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass score</td>
<td>Level-by-level pass/fail policy (60 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ELI courses syllabus is based on selected themes: Community, Academics, and Employment and Business. These themes are designed thoroughly through examining related topics. These topics are chosen extensively along with lists of vocabulary, as derived from the CEFR B1-C1, IELTS, function as critical factors in students’ ability to receive and produce the language for each designed course level. Based on a blended approach, thinking skills, presentations skills, and sub-skills are infused within all aspects of the curriculum to develop well-rounded students. Tables three and four in Appendices A & B illustrate samples of weekly pacing guides.

The learning objectives included in the pacing guides give teachers the privilege of selecting the materials and teaching methods that are most suitable for helping them to meet their learners’ needs. In addition, the semi-structured nature of the model means that the curriculum
provides teachers with only general guidelines on how to structure their classes. The lesson plan models (syllabus guide in tables three and four in Appendices A and B) encourage teachers to clarify the goals of particular lessons to their learners at the beginning of each session. In addition, teachers include tasks in their lesson plans and design activities that will lead their students and assess how much of the outcomes their students had achieved.

Findings

While 370 students from the two campuses participated in the survey, the percentage of male responses was slightly higher (52%) than that of female participants (47.83%), as illustrated in figure one.

![Campus Participants](image)

*Figure 1. Campuses participants*

**Part 1. Closed-Ended Survey Questions**

*Progress in English Attainments*

The students rated their progress in English based on a scale of zero to ten. Most students’ answers were in the middle of the scale, with a tendency toward big improvement. However, the percentages of those at the extreme ends of the scale were also relatively high (16% selected minimal progress, and 11% chose significant progress), as illustrated in figure two.

![Rate your progress from 1 to 10](image)

*Figure 2. Progress rate among students*
In another similar description illustrated in figure (3), students evaluated the improvement in their level of language ability after the English program. The majority (40%) said their level had improved, and 15% said their level had significantly improved.

![Figure 3. Change in proficiency level before and after](image)

The data obtained from the survey also showed that most students had experienced some improvement while studying at the ELI. However, the level of improvement among the students varied significantly. That can be attributed to two factors: the first factor is the variation in the students’ level of language ability and preparation due to an unreliable placement test and previous preparation they received at their high schools. The second factor is related to the teaching and learning environment, including teaching quality and the campus on which the student was studying. It was, therefore, important to examine the data of both male and female students, focusing on the improvement, in each individual skill, to determine whether there were any possible effect of gender.

More analysis of the obtained data indicated that there was a variation in opinions between students studying in different learning environments that were related to gender. Female students indicated that their level of English had significantly improved. Learners’ dispositions in language education are usually affected by several factors, as argued by Ortega (2009). She concluded that gender is one main factor that affects the duration and how a learner learns and processes a language. Other research has discussed the impact and difference of gender on second language acquisition and attainment and why these differences exist. Some differences are related to brain functions and nature. An interesting research-based proved argument by Dionne, Dale, Boivin, and Plomin (2003) indicates that the female mind is more arranged for language gaining indeed from birth.

Other differences that appear in a study by Mahmud (2018), indicate sex-based grouping (female-sex group, male-sex group, and mixed-sex group). Other studies such as one by GŁ, Ąlwka (2014) supported female outperformance in language learning due to their openness and readiness to use new linguistic structures, thus aligned with the socio-linguistic approach by Ellis (2012).
The results in this current paper revealed that the percentage of females who said that they have improved is higher by 20% than males. The percentage of female students who indicated no improvement was low (12% of the female population) in comparison with the percentage of male students who reported they had not experienced any improvement (20% of the male population) as illustrated in figures four and five.

**Figure 4. Rating progress in English among female students**

**Figure 5. Rating progress in English among male students**

**Skills Assessment**

The survey asked the students about their level of improvement related to the following language skills: presentation, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. The new curriculum helps learners develop the academic skills they needed to pursue their academic degrees. With this in mind, presentation, reading, and writing skills are emphasized more than listening and grammar skills. The data showed that the presentation skill was the skill that had improved the most, with the vocabulary skill coming second and the writing skill being the third
most improved skill. Grammar and then reading were the skills that had improved the least, as illustrated in figure six.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 6.** The most improved skill

Since reading was one of the main focuses of the curriculum objectives, it was surprising that there was slight improvement in reading skills. The indication that there were significant improvements in presentation, vocabulary building, and writing skills is clear since the curriculum objectives prioritized these skills.

When students selected the skills which they thought as the most skills that need development, the majority put grammar first in rank, then writing, followed by the presentation. Vocabulary, reading, and listening were the skills the students chose as the least in need of development, as illustrated in figure seven below.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 7.** Skills that still need improvement

Such expected results with this communicative curriculum that focuses on task-based and active learning, it is clear that students see the curriculum as new in a Saudi context. Saudi students are used to traditional teaching ways, with the grammar-translation method being the dominant ESL teaching approach (Aburizaizah, 2013). This finding reveals that the students were aware of the importance of presentation, vocabulary building, and writing in English to
their success in their preparatory program. They are aware of the 21st-century skills. However, not aware of required reading in their following studies after exiting the preparation year.

Students’ disposition towards selecting and customizing specific learning strategies is strongly impacted by some beliefs about learning a language. These learners have varied perceptions on what makes language learning practical and successful. Ellis (2008) discussed that some learners perceive the target language structure and vocabulary are two essential skills. However, some learners think that using the target language to produce meaningful output in certain situations and contexts is more important. In a needs analysis study carried out by Aburizaizah (2013), results reveal expressive skills were the most critical skills for students’ success in the preparatory year program.

The finding that the students considered the skill of reading to be not only the least essential skill but also the one that had improved the least contradicts the curriculum objectives, which state that reading is essential for students. This fact raises questions about the reading content of the new curriculum and the teaching methods used in classrooms. Reading comprehension is considered a difficult skill for learners with limited vocabulary. The reading materials included in the curriculum need to be revised to check their appropriateness for their level of ability. It is also essential to check on how teachers teach reading: are they implementing different reading strategies to develop student’s comprehension, or is the focus on vocabulary memorization, for instance?

Additionally, exciting results are worth mentioning here about an obvious similarity in the opinions of male and female students as they ranked the language skills. Responses from both female and male students to the question related to the most improved skills and the skills that required the most improvement were similar, as illustrated in figures eight and nine. The presentation skill, remarkably, was the most improved skill, and enhancements in vocabulary building were high too. Moreover, both groups agreed that grammar and reading were the least necessary skills. Writing seems to have been essential for the male students, but not for females. All the students agreed that regarding the need for improvement, the skills should be listed in the following order: presentation, writing, vocabulary, and grammar.
These findings are significant since it reveals that the goals of the new curriculum were accepted by both groups of students equally, regardless of environmental differences or the classroom learning experiences each student had had.

When students expressed their opinion on most challenging and most manageable language skills, their answers showed that presentation and writing skills were the most difficult skills to learn, as illustrated in figures (10) and (11).
Grammar and vocabulary skills were next in difficulty. These findings indicate that productive skills constitute a challenge for the students, whereas they considered receptive skills - listening and reading – the most effortless skills to learn. According to many studies, learners tend to develop their receptive skills before acquiring productive capability, and this is related to the cognitive approach where cognitive learning is about creating proper understanding and is a way of learning that helps the learners to use their brains more effectively (Sreena & Ilankumaran, 2018), thus reading and listening increase students’ comprehension which boosts their ability to speak and write. During their basic education years, Saudi students are taught English through traditional methods, which focus on the memorization of grammatical structures and vocabulary rather than on the practical use of the language.

**Part 2. Open-Ended Survey Questions**

In the open-ended questions, the participants clarified their areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction toward the new curriculum. Two hundred and forty-five students responded to the questions in this section. Answers from participants presents four categories named as (C1: areas of unsatisfaction, C2: teachers, C3: content and skills, C4: program structure), as illustrated in a table (Table 5). Students’ opinions were clear in extracts from their responses. The most interesting suggestions put forward by the students proceed later in this document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go back to the previous curriculum.</td>
<td>Teachers were helpful.</td>
<td>Very challenging, materials make you work harder.</td>
<td>The program makes you depend more on yourself to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No clear goals.</td>
<td>The teacher made it very easy.</td>
<td>Presentation helped me to practice the language.</td>
<td>Not too many exams as in previous year, every three weeks, there is more time for practice before exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not organized, too much paper printing because there were no reference books.</td>
<td>Teachers and administrators have good attitude.</td>
<td>Variety of topics and activities are related to everyday life matters.</td>
<td>No book, there is flexibility in term activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of work and no campus library.</td>
<td>Arabic-speaking teachers helped us to understand grammar skills.</td>
<td>A lot of new VOC.</td>
<td>It has clarity, structure, and punctuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough and extended class hours.</td>
<td>Native English language teachers helped to improve my spoken English when talking to them.</td>
<td>The final project.</td>
<td>The extended class hours forced us to practice more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level one was very hard.</td>
<td>Teachers encouraged group work where weak students learn from strong ones.</td>
<td></td>
<td>It focuses on one skill every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment questions were not from the curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough focus on grammar.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students’ Suggestions for Future Curriculum Development

Unexpectedly, a high number of students gave comprehensive and detailed recommendations; there was a consensus among students on some issues mentioned in their recommendations. Out of those students who gave recommendations, most proposed that the ELI should use a course book, because it is easier for students to follow and prepare for the test. Even with the online and printed materials provided by the teacher, the objectives are not clearly delivered, and students needed to strictly follow up with the teacher to get all of the material. They stated, “using a course book would make it easy for us to study, and to revise for exams”. The students indicated that they need the whole ELI approach to provide a clear description of the curriculum. Some students expressed their thoughts by saying, ”at the beginning of the new year, it was confusing to get used to the new system, or to understand what was required to pass the course successfully.”

Students suggested that the ELI reviews its policy regarding placing students into two levels; variations between students' levels in the same group impacted on the learning pace for good students. Likewise, several students commented that they were struggling in understanding the lesson content and following up with the teacher. Students displayed their dissatisfaction with long classroom hours, which negatively affected their motivation to learn English; they suggested that ELI implement a new policy of fewer contact hours, but with more efficient teaching instruction. They reflected, "not all English classes were beneficial--there were some useless activities". They also added, "because of the extended English teaching hours, we had no time to study other subjects". It is important to note that some students mentioned that although sometimes it is an advantage to be with a teacher for the whole semester, it could be a disadvantage if the teacher is less professional and their class is tedious. Some students also mentioned the demand of establishing a library on the campus where more resources are made available and easily accessible.

Areas of Distinction in the New Curriculum

There are areas that are used to organize the curriculum, and these areas led this curriculum seen to be distinctive in the eyes of the participants who were interested in expressing their ideas and thoughts. Answers are organized into three categories as follows:

Category 1: Teachers and quality of teaching. It includes thoughts on students’ independence, motivation, thinking skills, self-directed learning, students’ and teachers’ autonomy, and instructional performance. Most students indicated their preference for teachers’ instructional practices in terms of their roles in encouraging students to adopt a self-directed learning
approach synchronized with learning in groups, simplifying content and abstractness. Such two systems pushed to initiate and take the risk to learn. As explained by Liu (2015), autonomy, which holds students’ sense of responsibility toward their own learning of the target language, stands as a significant learner variable.

Students were satisfied with their experience in terms of pushing them to speak and present in English specifically when their teacher constantly uses the target language in and out of class. Teachers’ freedom was an essential factor in promoting instructional creativity and providing sufficient space to deliver the curriculum’s goals, illustrate, model, and role play content knowledge in an efficient way. Students think that when teachers used technology in their teaching, that made a distinctive aspect of the new curriculum.

With all such preference of certain noticed instructional practices, motivation is a significant factor contributing to success in second language learning. Many research conducted on L2 motivation emphasizes several techniques to energize it. As Dörnyei elaborated (2001), these techniques, which can be used by students, classmates, and even instructors, consciously influence goal-related behavior and positive perception towards second language learning.

**Category 2:** Program structure. It focuses on students’ opinions and reflections on the distinctive areas on the structure of the course, timing and duration, and organization of the syllabus. The majority of responses agreed that skills were presented in a way that helped them to figure out their weakness and improve that area. The weekly syllabus was uncommonly organized in a skill-based model where each skill is assigned a fixed day. Such organization positively challenged students’ persistence and deep comprehension of the importance of each skill which sounded appealing to their daily study routine. This semi-segregated-skill approach is considerably aligned with several studies that reached motivating findings. Summarized by ElKoumy (2004), ELKoumy (1999), Gambrell and Chasen (1991), and Leaman (1993), these studies indicated that direct instruction of language structures had enhanced the narrative writing skills among students of an average and below levels.

Additional studies by Abdan (1983) and Cooper (1981) concluded that direct instruction of sentence structure enhances students’ writing performance. On the other hand, a blended approach of holistic and segregated-skill methods is more efficient model in enhancing learners’ writing abilities than using one approach alone. At the same level, the combination of both the holistic approach and the segregated-skill approach can boost students’ writing above the levels that occur with either alone. Such argument goes well with what Pressley (1998) elaborated,

Excellent classrooms involve a balancing of whole language experiences (e.g., reading of real texts, composition) and skills instruction. There is a good reason to suspect that classrooms that are either extremely skills-oriented or extremely anti-skills oriented (i.e., skills instruction occurs on an as-needed basis only in the context of reading and writing) are not as effective as more balanced classrooms”. (p. 286).

Other features of distinction of the program structure included grade distribution, multi-tasks in every session, the demand of weekly presentations delivered by students, extensive reading
comprehension, the inclusion of IELTS skills, and increased challenge with the positive absence of fixed textbooks.

**Category 3: Content.** It focuses on students’ opinions and reflections on the distinctive areas on the course topics, themes, vocabulary, and general knowledge throughout the sessions. Topics covered throughout the course were authentic and led to the effective functional use of the target language. An increased interest nowadays in the integration of language and content to focus on developing language proficiency among through real-life themes and engaging content through meaningful literacy and discussion activities in L2 classes, consequently, making the course more understandable and sensible, and at the same time boosting students’ academic language requirements. Defined by Ghee, Kee and Ismail (2012), EFL/ESL learners’ motivation is highly connected with the goal of that learning. In other words, when students are sufficiently oriented to learn a second language, knowing that target language becomes highly motivated. Other features of distinctions in the new curriculum led students to express their opinion on the challenging vocabulary lists throughout the course, the intensive and extensive focus on functional knowledge structures, and age-appropriateness of topics and themes.

With the data-driven analysis in this paper, some crucial issues need reconsideration. Some presented findings raise questions about the reading content of curricula, and teaching methods in classrooms. Reading comprehension is considered a difficult skill for learners with limited vocabulary. That means reading materials need to be revised to check appropriateness level for the student’s level of ability. It is also essential to check on how teachers teach reading, whether they implement different reading strategies to develop students’ comprehension or that it is a sole focus on vocabulary memorization. In revisiting speaking abilities, listening skills need more emphasis. Listening activities increase students’ understanding. As a result, the learners boost their abilities to speak and write. Students’ disposition towards selecting and customizing specific learning strategies is another crucial aspect that needs more consideration. It is strongly impacted by some beliefs when it comes to learning a language. Learners have varied perceptions on what makes language learning practical and successful. More issues also appear related to the varied level of improvement among students. For example, unreliable placement tests, previous high school studies caused significant variations in the students’ opinion. Other issues are related to the teaching and learning environment, such as the quality of teaching, and the campus on which the students were studying.

**Conclusion**

This exploratory study intends to look at how students enrolled at the foundation year program in tertiary education perceive the newly designed English curriculum and how their thoughts and reflections are valuable to revisit curriculum design principles in the context of Saudi tertiary education. The analysis in this paper attempts to manifest the differences and similarities in the viewpoints of participants. It also looks at how these viewpoints as guidelines for future enhancement of EFL curricula, and provides a profound understanding of a well-contextualized language curriculum that puts great emphasis on culture, autonomy, motivation, and blended learning approaches, accordingly, demystifying teacher preparation programs and decentralized university programs. Such educational processes will hopefully lead language teachers, curriculum designers, and decision-makers in Saudi Arabia to manage the learning contexts better and promote efficient practices in language programs.
About the Author:
Saeed Jameel Aburizaizah is a full time Associate Professor in Education and Applied Linguistics at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) with more than ten years of experience. Saeed holds a Master of Education in TESOL from the University of Exeter and Ph.D. in Education & Applied linguistics from Newcastle University – UK. Saeed currently works as a Consultant to Vice-President for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research and Vice-President for Development at KAU. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0608-5194

References

Aburizaizah, S. (2013). Developing a Framework for Classroom Lesson Delivery to Improve English Teachers’ Performance in the Foundation Year Programme at a Saudi University. English Language Teaching, 7(1), 1-8. DOI:10.5539/ELT.v7n1p1


A Need for a Substantive Change in Tertiary EFL Education


**Appendix A: Table 3. Pacing guide for week 1 – level 110**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>ELI 110</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total class Hours</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online enriching hours</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target levels</td>
<td>CEFR (B1-B2) - CLB (6) - IELTS (4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Thinking Skill</td>
<td>✓ Making predictions, ✓ Activating prior knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Study Skill</td>
<td>✓ Skimming and scanning, ✓ Mind-Mapping, ✓ Note-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Presentation Skill</td>
<td>✓ Using proper voice tone, ✓ Using proper posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Rules Around the World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Available on ELI E-Inventory &amp; extra materials as provided by the instructor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Vocabulary list | 1. Relax (relax the rules) | 7. Respect | 14. Convert |
|                | 2. Compulsory | 8. Awkward | 15. Implement |
|                | 5. Competent | 11. Rule(s) (n.) | 18. Behavior |
|                | 13. Thorough | | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main SLOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the end of this week, students can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make predictions about content related to &quot;Rules around the World.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connect prior knowledge to their predictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Find key information from a specific content (recording, passage) related to &quot;Rules around the World.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Use verbs of compulsion and prohibition in meaningful contexts.
- Ask WH-Questions in meaningful contexts.
- Use suffixes that change verbs into nouns in meaningful contexts.
- Use listed vocabulary in meaningful contexts and sentences.
- Write an outline of home/family rules.
- Interview a classmate and present home/family rules to the class.

### Weekly Plan - 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill / language</th>
<th>Specific SLOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>- Ask WH-Questions in meaningful contexts: (who, what, when, where, why)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use suffixes that change verbs into nouns in meaningful contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use listed vocabulary for the week in meaningful sentences, and contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Identify parts of speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td>- Make predictions about a listening text related to “Rules around the World” based on prior knowledge, supporting visuals and other cues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td>- Identify key information about the text through skimming and scanning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>- Identify the primary genre or type of a listening text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td>- Make predictions about a reading text on “Rules around the World” based on prior knowledge, supporting visuals and other cues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Find key information in a reading text using skimming and scanning strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>- Map a visual outline of home/family rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>writing</strong></td>
<td>- Write an outline of home/family rules using verbs of compulsion and prohibition, and proper nouns. (6 Rules only).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use grammatical patterns and necessary vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Employ proper rules of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instructions for Instructors:**
- The instructor provides a model outline/mind-map.
- Students brainstorm ideas on mind map and the instructor gives instant feedback.
- Main task (equals 5 points): students produce the first draft of writing an "outline" of own home/family rules. The instructor gives instant feedback.
- At home, students edit and rewrite their work based on the instructor's feedback and upload/send their final drafts.
- Instructors score students’ written pieces and hand them to students during the next class.
- Students compile their work in their portfolios.
Scanned copies of scored work should be kept with the instructor.

| **Thursday** | - In pairs, interview a classmate to find out key information about home/family rules through using WH-questions (3 questions only per student). |
| **Speaking** | - Take notes on classmate's answers. |
| ****         | - Give a brief presentation to introduce a classmate’s home/family rules. (2 rules only per student). |
|              | - Use proper tone and posture during presentation. |

**Instructions for Instructors:**
- The instructor divides students into pairs.
- The instructor provides sample interview questions.
- Students brainstorm interview questions on worksheets.
- The instructor gives instant feedback.
- Main Task (equals 5 points): Students present their classmate's answers and the instructor scores their presentations using a scaled checklist.
- Scored sheets are kept with the instructor till next week.
- Students should compile their work in their Portfolios.
Scanned copies of scored work should be kept with instructor.

**Appendix A:** Table 4. Pacing guide for week 8 – level 120
### Pacing Guide – Week 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>ELI_120</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total class Hours</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online enriching hours</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Target levels:**
- CEFR (B2-C1) - CLB (8) - IELTS (5.5)

**Essential Thinking Skill**
- Making predictions
- Activating prior knowledge

**Essential Study Skill**
- Skimming and scanning
- Mind-Mapping

**Essential Presentation Skill**
- Using proper voice tone.
- Using proper posture.

**Theme**
- Community

**Personality**

**Topic**
- Personality

**Material**
- Available on ELI E-Inventory & extra materials as provided by the instructor

**Vocabulary list**
- 1. appropriately
- 2. gratefully
- 3. uncontrollably
- 4. trophies
- 5. volunteered
- 6. weight
- 7. admitted
- 8. coach
- 9. wallet
- 10. borrow
- 11. fault
- 12. competing
- 13. whispered
- 14. rare
- 15. mechanical
- 16. otherwise
- 17. take-up
- 18. went-off
- 19. used to
- 20. apart
- 21. equipment
- 22. details
- 23. forever
- 24. huge
- 25. annoying
- 26. support
- 27. funny
- 28. lifestyle
- 29. childhood
- 30. couple

### By the end of this week, students can

- Make predictions about a content related to "Personality".
- Connect prior knowledge to their predictions.
- Find key information from a specific content (Personalities) through skimming and scanning.
- Identify and use mixed conditionals in the past, the present and the future in meaningful contexts.
- Identify and use adjectives in meaningful sentences and contexts.
- Identify parts of speech.
- Write 2-3 paragraphs on Describing a feature of personal character that a learner finds significant.
- Design a presentation on how to describe one's personality.

### Weekly Plan - 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill / language</th>
<th>Specific SLOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday Grammar &amp; Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>Identify and use mixed conditionals in the past in meaningful sentences and contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and use mixed conditionals in the present in meaningful sentences and contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and use mixed conditionals in the future in meaningful sentences and contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and use adjectives in meaningful sentences and contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify parts of speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday Listening</strong></td>
<td>Make predictions about a listening text related to “Personalities” based on prior knowledge, visual and other cues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and analyze key information related to “Personalities” through skimming and scanning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify the primary genre or type of a listening text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday Reading</strong></td>
<td>Make predictions related to “Personalities” through skimming and based on prior knowledge, visuals and other cues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and analyze key information related to “Personalities” through scanning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday writing</strong></td>
<td>Create a thesis statement and a title in preparation for writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write a 2-paragraphs essay (400 words) on describing a feature of personal character that a learner finds essential by engaging the pre-writing process and clustering techniques and through explaining</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the following:

*What is it?*

*Is it a common characteristic?*

*Why it is important?*

*How does this characteristic lead to success in life?*

- Understand and identify what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.
- Employ necessary grammatical patterns and vocabulary of the week.
- Employ proper rules of spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

**Instructions for Instructors:**

- The instructor provides samples of an essay to students.
- As an alternative, students can use their mobile devices to search for information and supporting ideas keeping in mind plagiarism concepts.
- Students start writing their first draft and the instructor gives instant feedback.
- Main task (equals 5 points): students produce the second draft of their writing and the instructor gives instant feedback.
- At home, students edit and rewrite their work based on instructor's feedback and upload/send their final drafts.
- The instructor scores students’ written pieces and hands them to students in the next class.
- Students compile their work in their portfolios.
- Scanned copies of scored work should be kept with the instructor.

**Thursday Speaking**

- Present information answering the following questions:
  - How would you describe yourself?
  - Are you similar or different to your brother(s)/sister(s)?
  - Choose a classmate, in which ways are you similar to your friends?
- Use proper tone and posture during presentation.

**Instructions for Instructors:**

- The instructor provides a sample description.
- Main task (equals 5 points): students present their ideas, and the instructor scores their presentations using a scaled checklist.
- Scored drafts are kept with the instructor till next week.
- Students should compile their work in their portfolios.
- Scanned copies of scored work should be kept with the instructor.
The Necessity of Endowing EFL Learners with the Fifth Language Skill: A Key to a Successful Learning Experience

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Abstract
In this increasingly interconnected epoch, the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) along with culture that is considered as a fifth skill has become inevitable. Therefore, EFL teachers are impelled to introduce cultural instruction in their classes. They are then advised to combine the teaching of language skills with the foreign culture because it prepares their learners to behave successfully in intercultural encounters, gain solid cultural knowledge, overcome cultural obstacles, and promote their cultural awareness. The main questions addressed in this research focus on the inclusion of the cultural component in language subjects’ syllabuses, and the type of teaching strategies that can ameliorate the status of cultural instruction. This study points out the key importance of implementing intercultural information in EFL contexts founded on a case study undertaken at the University of Oran 2 in Algeria. This paper targeted a group of Master II students by using an array of data collection means including a questionnaire given to the learners, an interview done with the teachers, and classroom observation sessions carried out by the researchers. The major aims of this work were to verify the learners’ perceptions of cultural learning, and outfit students with core foundations of culture. The results demonstrated that the incorporated teaching techniques have enriched the students’ cultural understanding and intensified their linguistic adeptnesses. It is suggested that these teaching initiatives can aid learners be compassionate, understandable, and tolerant human beings.

Keywords: Cultural awareness, EFL contexts, fifth language skill, Master students, teaching strategies

Introduction

In the current-time progressively globalized climate, where modern instruments of communication can ensure that our learners can be acquainted with alien cultures with unprecedented ease, it is even more inescapable for EFL teachers to pique their students’ interests to facts about gaining mastery of the target language along with its cultural norms and issues. Teaching culture as an integral ingredient of language learning boosts the learners’ cultural awareness, broadens their horizons, and deepens their general knowledge. Intercultural language learning provides the requisite skills for students to assist them in the use of language in culturally aware manners. It also prepares them to manage and appreciate border crossing on multitudinous levels.

The principal premise of this work is to accentuate a pressing need for the incorporation of intercultural awareness in EFL milieux by propounding some instructional methods that repel violence and call for understanding and mutual respect.

Background

Language and Culture: Establishing the Ties

Understanding language affects the ways it is taught, and it impacts lesson planning and classroom pedagogies. Being a complex system practiced by people in their daily lives to express themselves, language has a dual function; it is both a communication tool and a culture vehicle. To speak a language implies having access to a culture; it is through language that a human being is identified as a member of a community, of a culture. It is approved that language serves as an essential window on the universe; it mirrors culture and allows its users to acquire aspects of the culture they carry. Language and culture are entwined; they are closely interrelated and vital to building a solid partnership. In the same vein, Ishihara and Cohen (2021) spotlight:

Learning a new language can be compared to joining a new community physically or metaphorically, and can be viewed not just as acquiring language form but also understanding social norms and cultural practices commonly shared in the second language (L2) community, which are not always explicitly stated or obvious to novice members or outsiders (p. 1).

As a result, a good comprehension of the inextricable interrelationship and interdependence between language and culture altogether with a sound grasp of diverse cultures will lead to successful intercultural communication.

What is Culture?

Due to its complex quality, culture is a fuzzy and challenging concept that has manifold meanings and has been utilized in distinct discourses. Culture is viewed as a whole social heritage of man. It is an amount of knowledge that people have about a given society. This knowledge can be seen in diverse ways, and when translated into language teaching and learning means teaching a sum of information about what people think, believe, own, and do as members of a particular community.

The various definitions of culture attest its complicatedness as a human phenomenon. Specialists, for centuries, have not reached a consensual and standard interpretation; each perceived it from a particular angle. Some scholars describe it as a social fact and as a learned behavior, others view it as a system of symbols and meaning, and another category see it as a communication system. Culture is regarded as the carrier of people’s values and thoughts and as
being dynamic because it is subjected to changes; it is fluid rather than static. This suggests that culture is a system of communication through which people convey their feelings, beliefs and perceptions. Highlighting this eminent function, Samovar et al. (1981) point out:

Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks with whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted... culture... is the foundation of communication (p.24).

Accordingly, some definitions refer to culture as a symbolic system. Many anthropologists and linguists maintain that it is a system that comprises a range of symbols and meanings which are communicated through a linguistic system. Symbols are of great importance in making sense of culture and help in making up our communication mode. In this regard, Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) clarifies that culture is:

a set of systems or codes of symbols and meanings. 1) Culture is composed of symbols and other signs; these provide a structure for social actors, limiting possible choices to those culturally available. 2) These symbols and signs are the tools people use to convey meaning; these are the resource materials from which people choose to convey what meanings they wish. 3) These symbols and signs are combined into systems (or codes). 4) Researchers study particular texts in order to understand how the larger entity, culture, operates (p.17).

**Fundamental Components of Culture**

In this huge globe, there is a variety of cultures which are depicted as being unique and specific. All cultures contain special parts that are vital for the process of humans’ existence and social interactions. In the area of foreign language education, it is recommended that the first thing to consider is the amount of difference between your own and the host culture in terms of the elements of culture (Paige & al., 2020). Some of these elements are described as being observable, such as behaviors and practices, and the others as not observable, namely perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, etc. (see figure 1).

**Behaviors**

Behaviour is a word that refers to the way in which people comport themselves and react to the situations they confront on the basis of their gained beliefs and values. Consequently, productive, efficient, and healthy persons are able to shift roles as needed (e.g., from participant to leader, from employee to spouse) and understand the appropriate behaviors in each context (Cushner & Brislin, 1996).

**Perceptions**

Perception means the capacity of obtaining knowledge and impressions by means of the senses and awareness. It is claimed that perception goes through three stages:

- **Selection:** it is the first step through which special information is amassed.
- **Organization:** at this phase, the information is structured in an understandable manner.
- **Interpretation:** in this final level, people assign meaning to data on the ground of their experiences.
Attitudes

An attitude is defined as a psychological reaction to people, conditions and facts that has an impact on a person’s behavior. It is also an association of one’s opinions and emotions. Attitudes play a crucial role in governing different aspects of persons’ character because they influence the way they discern and act towards many situations.

Beliefs

Beliefs have to do with the sum of viewpoints that people hold about the outside world. A belief represents a set of cultural facets that one inherits from his own community. Beliefs are determined by the individual’s culture. As a consequence, cultural beliefs are shared by considerable members of a given culture.

Values

Values are the moral norms and beliefs that affect people’s actions. They are essential to understand how culture functions and individuals use them to guide their thoughts and behaviours. Cushner and Brislin (1996) opine that:

People make judgements and draw conclusions about what is and what is not of value. These judgements give rise to certain presuppositions from which people act with little or no conscious awareness. These presuppositions learned during childhood, play a pervasive role in all areas of people’s adult experiences (p.318-319).

This implies that values have an important effect on humans’ ways of thinking and behaving. Moreover, they are the ground for one’s conduct and motivation.

All these elements of culture can be expressed by human beings through the use of language, that is they are conveyed by it. This shows the close relationship between language and culture. In this respect, the authors highly recommend EFL teachers to include the foreign culture in their courses.

\[ Figure 1. \text{ The Cultural Iceberg in 2021 (adapted from printrest.com)} \]
Defining Interculturality

Interculturality signifies the interaction and exchange between individuals from diverse cultural contexts, using language suitably in a manner that reflects awareness and ability to understand other cultures. Similarly, Barrett (2008) declares that interculturality is:

the capacity to experience cultural otherness and to use this experience to reflect on matters which are normally taken for granted within one's own culture and environment....in addition, interculturality involves using this heightened awareness of otherness to evaluate one's own everyday patterns of perception, thought, feeling and behaviour in order to develop greater self-knowledge and self-understanding (p.1)

Interculturality, therefore, surpasses having information about a dissimilar culture, it comprises learning to comprehend how one’s culture shapes beliefs of oneself, of the world, and of human beings’ bounds with others. To highlight the role of intercultural language learning in promoting the students’ grasp of their language and culture as well as the recognition of other languages and cultures. Liddicoat et al. (2003) maintain:

Intercultural language learning involves developing with learners an understanding of their own language (s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture. It is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognised, mediated, and accepted. Learners engaged in intercultural language learning develop a reflective stance towards language and culture, both specifically as instances of first, second, and additional languages and cultures, and generally as understandings of the variable ways in which language and culture exist in the world (p.46).

Additionally, teaching interculturality to language learners allows them to overcome cultural barriers because in terms of education for interculturality, the idea that the awareness and knowledge of other cultures can help us either reduce or remove stereotypes is strong (Dervin & Simpson, 2021).

Intercultural language learning, hence enables learners to better comprehend their own and others’ thoughts and experiences which will increase awareness of the self and of the others. As a result, it is highly appreciated to integrate this specific learning in English classes.

Methodology

The main research aims were to explore the students’ thoughts about learning the alien culture and propose some teaching strategies that can improve the learners’ language capacities and help them up their cultural awareness. Based on the research objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. Is the cultural component included in language subjects’ syllabuses?

RQ2. What type of teaching strategies can meliorate the status of this cultural instruction?

As possible answers, the following hypotheses were suggested:

H1. It seems that the cultural components are integrated in a limited way.

H2. A teaching built on the engagement of the learner in the teaching/learning process with the teacher’s orientations may lead to a betterment of the teaching of cultural facets in EFL settings.

Participants and Procedures
This academic study cited in this paper took place at the University of Oran 2 in Algeria. It targeted 95 Master II EFL students and 7 teachers in the department of English. To gather useful data, a questionnaire administered to the learners, an interview conducted with the teachers, in addition to the process of classroom observation, were utilized.

With regard to the basic aims, students’ opinions were investigated through a questionnaire because this tool can be used to elicit teachers’ and students’ comments on a wide range of issues and information can be obtained from large numbers of respondents (Richards, 2005).

Being powerful data collection instruments, the interviews were carried out with the teachers because they allow for a more in-depth exploration of issues than is possible with a questionnaire (Richards, 2005).

To capture what happens in reality within the classroom, the process of classroom observation has been adopted as echoed by O’Leary (2020):

Schools and universities have come to rely on it as an important means of collecting evidence about what goes on in classrooms. This evidence has invariably been used to inform current conceptualizations of what makes for effective teaching and learning along with providing the basis on which judgements about the performance and competence of teachers are made (p.xii).

The examination of the use of cultural ingredients in Master II students’ syllabi shows that these aspects are included in a very limited extent or sometimes totally absent from some courses. For this purpose, the researchers see that the organisation of seminars whose main topics accentuate culture and which will be devoted basically to these learners. These seminars will also try to involve the students in the learning process and encourage collaboration between them because this can help them enrich their cultural awareness and high-order thinking skills (Toyoda, 2016).

The proposed courses do contain pivotal themes, namely:

- Introduction to Culture
- Ethnocentrism
- Prejudice
- Culture Shock
- Cultural Awareness

The learners are asked to work in pairs or groups on these topics related to culture, they are required to carry out researches on them, then to give presentations on these topics. The emphasis will be put on:

- Cultural knowledge: This means the understanding of cultural differences.
- Cultural skills: This implies the ability to act and behave appropriately in a myriad of cultures.

These skills encompass mutual respect, tolerance, and dealing with conflicting situations.

**Major Findings**

- Learners’ Questionnaire

The analysis of the learners’ questionnaire shows that 74.73 % of the informants declared that the inclusion of the cultural components in their language modules is moderate. 22.10 %
said that it is rare to deal with culture in their classes. Only 3.16% perceived that culture is never integrated in their courses. When asked about their viewpoints about the intercultural activities that were implemented in their course, all of the respondents enunciated their deeper appreciation of the proposed teaching techniques. They reported that it has really helped them to gain a profound understanding of many key notions, and to engage effectively in the learning process.

- Teachers’ Interview
  The totality 100% of the interviewed teachers revealed that the amount of cultural ingredients incorporated in language subjects is really insufficient. Many of them stated that cultural teaching is an integral part in foreign language education, and thus it should be encouraged in all modules. 85.71% of the participants opined that cultural teaching needs to be revisited. They claimed that the teaching of culture can be improved through the incorporation of technology, because according to them digital resources will offer the students the possibility to get better acquainted with authentic materials, and to explore the target language and its culture in a profound way. As a result, the learners’ language abilities and culture knowledge will be expanded and reinforced.

- Classroom Observation
  Classroom observation sessions demonstrated that the students were really engaged in the learning process, they expressed a wide range of opinions, and discussion was promoted. Moreover, the researchers noted that the students prefer to learn in a dynamic and autonomous learning atmosphere.

Discussion of the Findings
The results revealed the following points:

1- The Need to Give more Importance to Foreign Culture Learning in Master Courses:
   The analysis of the questionnaire indicated that the majority of students (95.79%) expressed their strong desire to learn about alien cultures because they see that this learning can expand their knowledge and equip them with necessary abilities to take part in worldwide encounters. One of the participants declared that: being interculturally competent makes me feel confident even if I am abroad. Most of the learners insist on the fact that obtaining a sound cultural teaching is a valuable asset that:
   - helps them understand their own culture to preserve their identity and their values.
   - gives them the possibility to develop effective communication skills.
   - allows them to overcome cultural barriers and avoid misunderstandings.
   - helps them realise their personal growth.

2- An Increase of Intercultural Awareness:
   From the teachers’ interview, it was deduced that there was a real recognition by EFL teachers about the little or no inclusion of cultural material in English courses in general and Master’s Lectures in particular which confirms our first hypothesis. Most of the teachers (85.71%) expressed the real quest for integrating the teaching of culture in all classes. They maintained that bringing the foreign culture into the classroom can raise the learners’ enthusiasm, enlarge their vocabulary, enhance their language competencies, and augment their intercultural awareness.

3- An Effective Involvement in the Learning Process:
These strategies seemed to engage students in the learning process, and this confirms our second hypothesis. Through observation sessions, it was noticed that their focus and attention have been raised, since they were attracted by the information brought by their peers in the classrooms. This climate has encouraged discussion and produced higher quality effort among Master students. Their engagement has therefore been boosted, and their motivation was conspicuous.

4- Acquisition of Large Amounts of Oral and Written Input:
When observing these learners, it was inferred that out of these seminars, the students could acquire considerable notions of language capabilities including:

- Familiarity with technical words.
- Accuracy and fluency in writing.
- Conducting a debate.
- Learning how to develop a sense of analysis and criticism.

As a consequence, the analysis of the results demonstrated a good understanding of the proposed topics, an acquisition of useful information, and a better learning achievement.

Conclusion
This research is an attempt to show how cultural information can have a multitude of merits, such as:

- Aiding the students to act and deal with people who are linguistically and culturally different, thus, this will prevent them from culture shock and misconceptions.
- Establishing constructive relationships with individuals from dissimilar backgrounds.
- Helping the learners become more tolerant, respectful, and more empathetic.
- Being able to adapt later to diverse work environments.

It should be noted that learning a foreign language along with intercultural education is paramount for language learners because it exposes them to distinct ways of understanding life, makes them able to absorb diversity, more aware of their own heritage, and cognizant of their acts.

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References
Mother Tongue Use in Beginner EFL Grammar Classes in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study

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Received: 8/23/2021 Accepted: 11/22/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Using the mother tongue (MT) in English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) classrooms is indispensable, especially in beginner classes. This paper aims to add to the present literature on this issue by highlighting the attitudes of both students and teachers towards MT use in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, the justifications for its use, and some of the actual interaction practices in grammar classes. It investigates the attitudes of 110 Saudi EFL female beginners and their two teachers toward using the Arabic language in EFL grammar classes at Jazan University. It also investigates the students' reasons for using or avoiding their MT. Moreover, it presents some of the functions that MT serves in EFL grammar classes. To collect the data, the researchers used two questionnaires and classroom observations. For data analysis, they used Microsoft Excel and thematic content analysis. The results indicated that, although both students and teachers generally have positive attitudes toward using the MT in EFL classes, they are also aware of the adverse effects of its overuse. The results also revealed that the teachers and students use MT in EFL classes to serve different classroom functions that ease the teaching and learning processes. Based on these findings, the study provided recommendations for teachers, curriculum designers, and future researchers.

Keywords: Arabic, attitudes, English as a foreign language (EFL), functions, grammar, mother tongue (MT), reasons, Saudi Arabia context

Introduction

Throughout the evolution of teaching methods for English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL), applied linguists have given considerable attention to the use or lack of use of the mother tongue (MT) as a basic principle (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The earliest method (the Grammar-Translation Method) recommended using the MT as a fundamental principle to teach grammar rules. After that, the Direct Method introduced a shift concerning MT use, which banned using MT to teach English in EFL/ESL classes. Later, after a series of different teaching methods with various positions regarding the MT status in the classroom, the Communicative Teaching Method called for MT use only when necessary. As Uyar (2012) indicated, the effectiveness of using MT in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom depends upon the teaching context and upon factors other than the strategy itself. Therefore, research in different contexts of EFL teaching has revealed varying results (Turnbull & Evans, 2017; Al-Enezi, 2018; Al-Zayed, 2019; Binmahboob, 2020).

Teaching grammar is a fundamental aspect of teaching languages. It helps learners better understand and learn a language. However, learning the grammars of foreign languages is sometimes challenging for new EFL learners, especially if they are different from their native tongue's grammar. Levine (2014) indicated that grammar is associated with the learners' identities, just as it connects to other language entities. Harmer (1991) indicates that EFL speakers are inclined to compare the grammars of their MT with those of English. Paradowski (2007) states that if the purpose of MT use is to aid second language (L2) learners to understand a grammatical rule, such use is probably the most economical one. He adds that "careful, judicious, and timely use and position of the L1 in the classroom which helps the students get the maximum possible benefit from the lesson should thus be countenanced." (p. 153).

When Saudi secondary school students go to college, they are not usually proficient in understanding English. Al-Nofaie (2010) states that the weekly number of English sessions for school students (four) and the allocated time for each session (45 minutes) do not give them sufficient exposure to the language. Saudi students also do not usually use English extensively outside school and college. Thus, college courses are taught at a higher level of English than students' actual proficiency level after finishing general education programs due to the reasons mentioned above: lack of sufficient target language (TL) input in school and encountering incomprehensible input beginners in college. Krashen (1982) highlights this problem of lack of comprehensible input in his comprehensible input hypothesis. He states that learners should receive comprehensible input to internalize it and learn the TL. He also provides a condition for this input to be comprehensible: it should be only one level above the learners' current level.

Teachers of beginner classes in college usually reduce incomprehensible input by switching to the students' MT while explaining English grammar concepts (Masrahi, 2016; Adil, 2019). Masrahi (2016) states that teachers and students commonly use MT in Saudi EFL college classrooms and that this is a strategy employed by bilingual teachers to facilitate the educational process. In addition, conversing in the MT can also help teachers explain delicate lexical items, effortlessly clarify meanings, and provide more linguistic input to young students simultaneously learning two languages (Canale, 1983; Brown, 2001; Murad, 2013). Thus, MT is considered a facilitating tool in the English classroom for beginners (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Al-Katheery, 2014; Adil, 2019).
However, Adil (2019) concludes that although the MT use is beneficial in explaining new English vocabulary meanings, it has some adverse effects, and the teachers should ensure the dominance of the TL in the classroom. Therefore, the related literature addressing this issue varies regarding its findings regarding MT use in EFL classes.

Literature Review

Positive Effects of MT Use in EFL Classes

Much of the previous literature has supported MT use in EFL classes due to its essential functions. For example, Greggio and Gil (2007) stated that shifting to the MT in EFL classrooms may facilitate communication and learning. Brooks-Lewis (2009) indicated that the Spanish-speaking learners in Mexican colleges viewed the inclusion of their L1 in the classroom as helpful to their EFL learning experience. Using classroom recordings and questionnaires in her study, Jingxia (2010) concluded that code-switching is widespread in some Chinese EFL college classrooms and has a positive role in EFL teaching and learning. Demir (2012) emphasized that L1 facilitates Turkish students' self-confidence in learning grammar, and Debreli and Oyman (2015) concluded that Turkish students expressed positive perceptions toward using L1 in their L2 classes and for the lower-level students.

Moreover, Turnbull and Evans (2017) concluded that the L1 discussion positively affected the reading comprehension of Japanese EFL university students and called for implementing judicious use of the MT in classrooms. In the same year, Shabir (2017) showed that limited L1 use in teaching Applied Linguistics for master's program students at the University of Queensland, Australia is necessary and beneficial for certain activities. Moreover, Kocaman and Aslan (2018) concluded that Turkish students seemed willing to use their MT while learning English.

Besides, Narayan (2019) called for the judicious use of MT in Fijian English as a second language (ESL) classrooms because it increases interaction. More recently, Aoyama (2020) called for the EFL Japanese high school teachers' MT use in their classrooms in conjunction with communicative teaching strategies.

In the Saudi context, Jenkins (2010) suggested that using only the TL in Saudi EFL classrooms might not suit the context and called for re-examining the current educational policy. Al-Nofaie (2010) stated that the students' main uses of MT in a Saudi intermediate school for females are for “giving exam instructions, translating words, contrasting the two languages, explaining grammar, asking questions, and participating in pair work” (p. 78). Al-Shammari (2011) also concluded that MT was applied in English classes at technical colleges in Saudi Arabia to ease the language learning process and increase students' comprehension.

In addition, Khresheh (2012) showed that Saudi EFL teachers used translations to explain English and that students used Arabic to express themselves, with MT serving as a means of encouragement and securing a comfortable learning environment. Finally, Al-Enezi (2018) pointed out that MT use in Saudi EFL classes helps clarify course content, stating that students are more attentive and less confused when teachers instruct them in their MT.
Adverse Effects of MT Use in EFL Classes

Some of the previous literature has supported the sole use of TL in the EFL/ESL classrooms and reported adverse effects of MT use. For example, Nazary (2008) showed that Iranian university students rejected L1 use in EFL classes to a great extent, indicating that intermediate students had stronger negative attitudes toward the MT than beginner and advanced-level students. Using classroom observations and two focus group interviews with secondary-level students and their teachers, Khati's (2011) study offered simple and practical strategies for enhancing TL use in Nepali EFL secondary school classrooms. In addition, Romli and Abd Aziz (2015) showed that although both inexperienced and experienced English teachers in Pahang University, Malaysia, used Malay to teach English, the inexperienced teachers had positive views on its use and the experienced ones had negative ones.

More recently, Al-Zayed (2019) stated that although the Jordanian teachers used MT to teach English and explain new vocabulary effortlessly, they believed it reduced teaching quality. Also, Wijaya, Mety, and Bram (2020) concluded that the students and their teachers in Master program students specialized in English education in Indonesia used MT. However, they recommended that MT is better used in informal social interactions than EFL/ESL educational contexts since it will hinder students from gaining TL interaction skills.

Also, in the Saudi context, Mahmoud (2012) concluded that MT use negatively affected the foundational year for Saudi EFL students at King Abdul-Aziz University and recommended avoiding that use. Instead, he suggested using creative inductive teaching techniques in grammar, such as simplifying, miming, drawing, and acting. Four years later, Masrahi (2016) commented that the low-level EFL learners taught by teachers from multilingual backgrounds use the MT to accomplish learning and social behaviors. He indicated that using L1 minimizes the students' positive contribution and does not provide them the full opportunity to speak in the TL in the classroom. He also recommended that the English Language Centre at Jazan University develop a strategy to minimize MT use to teach English to the lowest possible level.

Two years later, Al-Mohaimeal and Al-Murshed (2018) concluded that while Saudi EFL female elementary college students hold positive views about MT use in English classes during their preparatory year, the advanced intermediate students hold negative attitudes toward it. More recently, Binmahboob (2020) indicated that although Saudi EFL secondary school class teachers in Riyadh admit that MT has many pedagogical functions, they encourage students not to depend upon it in the classrooms. The teachers also believe that the MT role is inadequate within the communicative approach, positing that it hinders language teaching, and its use must be restricted.

Rationale and Research Questions

As seen in the literature above, several studies in the Saudi context have investigated this issue in different schools and universities (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Mahmoud, 2012; Masrahi, 2016; Binmahboob, 2020). These studies have arrived at different conclusions on MT use in EFL Saudi classes. However, none of the studies investigated the attitudes of both EFL Saudi college teachers and their beginners toward using the MT, the justifications for its use, and the actual interaction practices in grammar classes. Thus, it is crucial to investigate this issue to contribute to the current literature. Furthermore, since attitudes, reasons, and practices are crucial aspects of
teaching a foreign language, it is beneficial to investigate them to broaden the current literature on this issue for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, administrators, and future researchers.

Therefore, the present study focuses on two female beginner grammar classes at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. It investigates students' attitudes toward using Arabic in EFL grammar classes and their justifications for using or avoiding it. It also investigates the teachers' perceptions of such use and why they use the MT in their classes. Further, it sheds light on the actual teaching and learning practices related to this issue. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions concerning Jazan University:

1. What are the Saudi female EFL beginners' attitudes toward using the Arabic language in EFL grammar classes?
2. What are the reasons for beginners using or avoiding the Arabic language in EFL grammar classes?
3. What are the teachers' attitudes towards using the Arabic language in EFL grammar classes and its purposes?

Methodology

Context and Participants

The researchers conducted the present study during the second semester of 2019–2020 in the English Department of Female Art and Humanity College at Jazan University. Two bilingual female grammar instructors and their students were selected. Both teachers are bilingual, in Arabic and English. The teachers have five and ten years of grammar teaching experience for preparatory-year beginners. The first instructor taught two grammar classes consisting of 45 students in each class, while the second instructor taught two grammar classes with 13 students in the first class and 7 in the second. The whole number of student participants who completed the questionnaire was 85. However, all the 110 students were observed studying levels 1 and 2 of all the English language skills and Grammar 1 and 2. The prescribed textbook for Grammar 1 and 2 was *English Grammar in Use* by Raymond Murphy (2012). The students' performance ranged from a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.27 to 3.98, with an average of 3.78. Thus, the participants were a representative sample of beginner-level students and teachers from the English Department. Therefore, those participants were considered suitable for exploring the attitudes of Saudi female college beginners and their teachers toward using their MT in EFL classes and their classroom practices of that use.

Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

The researchers used two questionnaires and classroom observation checklists from Al-Nofaie (2010) to collect the data. These instruments are illustrated below:

*Student Questionnaire*

The student questionnaire was used, with minor modifications, to elicit the college students' attitudes toward MT use in English Grammar classes and the reasons behind such usage. The questionnaire consisted of a frequency scale of five points, ranging from “always” to “never,” as Al-Nofaie (2010) established, to facilitate quantitative data collection and to attain reliability (see Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of 15 close-ended and two open-ended questions. The answers to the close-ended questions were on a five-point scale, ranging from “always” to “never,” and elicited the frequency of MT use those students found acceptable in EFL classes.
The two open-ended questions included documenting why students are encouraged to use Arabic in the classroom or avoid such use. The researchers employed an Arabic version of the questionnaire to facilitate participant comprehension. The target participants received the questionnaire electronically. They were encouraged to ask the principal researcher about any clarifications during her presence to observe their classes. Eighty-five of the student participants returned the questionnaire completed within two weeks, as requested.

**Teachers' Questionnaire**

The instructors of the four classes were given an open-ended question questionnaire, which consisted of five questions taken from Nofaie's (2010) semi-structured interview (see appendix B). The two teachers had one day to read and answer the questions carefully. The procedure differed from Nofaie's (2010) interviews in that the two teachers refused to be audio-recorded and reported that they were busy with other lectures within the department during the working days. Thus, to elicit their responses satisfactorily, they were given the questions to write their answers at their convenience. The first question was whether they agree with language educators who believe that the MT should be excluded from EFL classes. The second one inquired whether they use the Arabic language in their classes, and if so, for what purposes. The third question was modified to ascertain whether they believe their students' language proficiency level would be affected by the Arabic used in the classroom. The fourth question asked whether they believed using Arabic is indicative of less creative teaching. The final question asked whether they allowed their students to use the Arabic language in class and why or why not. This qualitative questionnaire aimed to gain more information to investigate whether using the Arabic language in the EFL classroom is helpful for the investigated teachers.

**Observation Checklists**

The principal researcher attended four lessons during her visit to the English department at Jazan University and completed the observation documents. Two observation checklists taken from Al-Nofaie's (2010) were modified and used (see appendix C). They were modified to suit college-level context since Al-Nofaie's study was conducted on secondary school students. They identify three different stages for teachers and students: beginning, during, and after the lectures. Using these observation checklists, the principal researcher observed two lessons each in Grammar 1 and Grammar 2. Each lesson had a two-hour duration. In addition, the researcher closely observed the purposes for which the two teachers and their students used the Arabic language in their routine lessons.

**Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

The data collection procedures continued for two weeks. Before applying the three methods of data collection, the researchers obtained an approval letter from Jazan University. As a necessary research procedure, the researcher informed both teachers and students of the aim of the study. The students were told not to write their names on the questionnaire to obtain accurate and valid results. Moreover, the researcher attended four lectures in four different classes (two classes for each EFL teacher). After the data collection process, the researchers used both qualitative and quantitative data analysis procedures. The qualitative portion of the student and teacher questionnaires and the classroom observation checklists were analyzed manually, based on thematic content analysis processes. The quantitative portion of the student questionnaires...
was analyzed statistically using Microsoft Excel to calculate the frequencies and percentages of the student responses.

Results

Students' Attitudes Toward Using MT EFL Classes

The student questionnaire results generally revealed positive attitudes toward using MT (Arabic) in EFL classes. The results displayed that more than half of the investigated students (63.5%) prefer teachers to use Arabic in English classes, and 70.5% prefer teachers to use Arabic if the lesson is boring. Also, 89.3% of the students believe that teachers should clarify challenging activities in Arabic. As for the MT value in explaining grammar rules and new vocabulary, 74% of the students believe grammar should be explained in Arabic; 87% believe that new vocabulary should be explained in Arabic; 70.5% of them reported they understand the new vocabulary when using bilingual dictionaries.

In addition, 83.4% prefer that their teachers present grammar lesson instructions in the Arabic language. In addition, 83.4% believe they can better understand the lesson when the teacher uses Arabic. Moreover, 85.8% of the students believe the teacher should explain the differences and similarities between Arabic and English in Arabic. Finally, 83.4% reported that they feel more comfortable when exam instructions are given in Arabic. Concerning the students' MT use in EFL classes, most of them (72.8%) prefer to ask their teacher questions in Arabic, and 62.3% of them prefer doing an activity with a partner in Arabic. Furthermore, 72.8% of the investigated students felt comfortable communicating with the teacher in Arabic; 83.4% reported that they feel more comfortable when exam instructions are given in Arabic; 87% feel that Arabic helps them express their feelings and ideas better than English. However, 44.6% of the investigated students think that using Arabic prevents them from learning English.

Reasons for MT Use in English Classes

Concerning the reasons that encourage the students to use MT in English classes, they reported that it is because they are in the preparatory year, and their English-speaking level is low as they lack adequate grammar and vocabulary to speak in English. The students also reported they use MT to understand the meanings of the new words accurately; that it helps them understand the grammatical rules better, learn how to answer questions, and obtain more precise clarifications from their teachers. Finally, they stated that MT helps them interact and communicate with teachers more quickly and easily.

Reasons for Avoiding MT Use in English Classes

The student participants reported they avoid using MT in English classes for various reasons. Sometimes, teachers mandate English only. At other times, the students themselves do not wish to switch to Arabic while speaking English. They know that speaking in MT sometimes forms a barrier to learning a new language. They believe they should speak English and overcome the fear of failure and shyness. In addition, they want to practice speaking the English language with their classmates, which will help them learn new vocabulary. Students also stated that they would avoid their MT if they were able to use the TL easily. They described future cases during which they would avoid using MT in English classes. They reported that they would use only TL if they were fluent in it and if it were easy for them to speak and completely understand words and meanings and understand the grammar thoroughly.
Teachers' Attitudes Toward MT Use in EFL Classes

MT Exclusion from EFL Classes
Both teachers rejected the idea of excluding MT from English classes. Instead, they mentioned that using MT (Arabic) helps students better understand grammar and that using only the English language blocks students' comprehension. The analysis of the observation sheets showed that the two teachers used their MT in teaching grammar. Some of their uses are illustrated in the section below:

MT Use Purposes in EFL Classes
Regarding the purposes of MT use in grammar classes, both teachers reported that they usually use it when necessary and as a last resort. They also reported that they use it to help their students understand English grammar better, check their comprehension, translate the new vocabulary and sentences to them, and help them learn better since they will learn better if they understand the meanings in their MT. Both teachers agreed that using Arabic in the classroom is helpful because of the students' lack of competence in the grammatical rules and new words and structures. The classroom observations verified the teachers' attitudes towards the purposes for which they use MT. Based on the classroom observations, both teachers use Arabic and encourage students to work with peers using Arabic to complete class activities more effectively. They use it to introduce, ask questions, reply to their students' requests, give instructions, check for students' understanding, and translate vocabulary (See Appendix C).

MT Negative Impact on Students' English Proficiency Level
As for the negative effect of the MT use on students' English proficiency level, both instructors agreed that the students' English skill levels would be affected by the Arabic used in the classroom, especially when studying at an advanced level. In addition, teachers agreed that using too much Arabic would affect students' academic skills in the future. For example, one of the teachers reported that the students would struggle to remember the English words if she used Arabic and translation. She also indicated that excessive use of Arabic in English classes would affect their English spelling negatively.

MT Use Impact on Teaching Creativity
Both teachers agreed on the potential negative impact of MT use on teaching creativity. They reported that there is often not enough time to complete lessons; thus, using Arabic expedites the teaching process. Therefore, the lack of suitable teaching settings, tools, and time will increase MT use in EFL classes as a strategy that makes teaching and learning faster. One of them stated that Arabic use affects teaching creativity, but she added: "using a little Arabic will not harm."

Allowing Students to Use MT
Finally, regarding whether instructors allow students to use Arabic, they reported that their students use it when asked. Furthermore, they want to ensure that their students better understand grammar, and when they cannot express themselves in English, they may do so in Arabic. Classroom observation showed that most students use Arabic in English grammar classes, preferring to employ the language when facing difficulties in learning grammar. Additionally, it was observed that the students felt comfortable and had a great desire to acquire English grammar through Arabic, which saved the teachers time and protected the students from
feelings of frustration while learning English. They used MT in grammar classes to make requests, such as (Mumkin niqaf Al-mukayf? "Is it possible to switch off the AC?") or ask their classmates questions, such as (Kam raqam tamrinik? "What is the number of your exercise?"). They also asked their teachers questions such as, (Hal naktub kula Al-waqā‘id Al-thalath lilmabnī lilmajhwl fī faqarah wahidah? "Shall we write all the three rules of passive voice in one paragraph?"). They would answer questions, as in (Tamrinī raqam thalāthah) "My exercise is number three." and (N ‘ām ḍhālimin) "Yes, we understand."

Discussion

The findings showed that most female Saudi Arabian EFL students who participated in this study had positive attitudes toward using the MT (Arabic) in English grammar classes. This finding agrees with previous research on EFL students' attitudes toward MT use in EFL classes, indicating that EFL learners hold positive attitudes toward MT use in class (Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Al-Noafia, 2010; Al-Shammari, 2011; Al-Moahimeed and Al-Mursheid, 2018; Kocaman and Aslan, 2018). However, this finding differs from Nazary's (2008) findings, reporting negative attitudes of the EFL students toward such use.

The findings also showed that the investigated students most commonly use Arabic because of their low English proficiency, limited English vocabulary, and inadequate grammar knowledge that lessens their ability to speak English. Therefore, MT use enables them to receive more precise clarifications from their teachers and communicate more effectively. These reasons for MT use align with Brown's (2001) claim that MT use is beneficial in clarifying the meaning of complicated items in the TL through translation. They are also congruent with previous research findings that support L1 as a tool for clarifying and explaining the TL (Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Khreshheh, 2012; Al-Enezi, 2018). Furthermore, these reasons support previous research reporting MT use for interaction and communication in the classroom (Narayan, 2019; Aoyama, 2020).

In addition, the findings indicated the students' awareness of the importance of avoiding excessive MT use in EFL classes. They reported that it forms a barrier to learning the TL and prevents them from practicing English speaking with their classmates. They stated they would have avoided MT use if they were fluent in English and had sufficient vocabulary and command of English grammar. Furthermore, they claimed that their positive attitudes towards using their MT would change when they reach higher levels. This claim indicates their awareness that such use is a temporary tool to be utilized only in beginner classes and that it has shortcomings in advanced EFL classes. The students' views above support Al-Moahimeed and Al-Mursheid's (2018) conclusion that while preparatory-year female Saudi college students in beginner EFL classes hold positive attitudes toward MT use in English classes, advanced intermediate students hold negative attitudes toward such use. They also support Nazary's (2008) finding that the intermediate Iranian university students had stronger negative attitudes toward MT use than the beginner-level students.

Similarly, although the teachers have positive attitudes towards MT use in EFL classes, they are aware that the students should use it only when they fail to understand the rules in English and when the teacher has no time to explain them in English. Furthermore, they believe that MT use in EFL classes has adverse effects, especially if the students are studying at an
advanced level, and that it will negatively affect the creativity of teaching, students' academic English skills, and their ability to think critically in English. These findings are similar Al-Zayed's (2019) indication that although teachers use MT to teach English effortlessly and explain new vocabulary, they believe it reduces the teaching quality. They also support Binmahboob's (2020) conclusion that it should not be used without restrictions despite the MT pedagogical functions since its role is inadequate within the communicative approach.

Finally, the study findings revealed some of the teachers' uses of MT in EFL classes, such as introducing, asking questions, replying to students' requests, providing instructions, verifying understanding, and translating vocabulary. Likewise, the findings revealed some of the students' uses of MT, such as requesting, asking, and answering questions. These uses go with previous research on the MT functions in EFL classes (Brown, 2001; Greggio and Gil, 2007; Khresheh, 2012; Masrahi, 2016; Al-Enezi, 2018). They also align with Binmahboob's (2020) conclusion that EFL teachers in Riyadh secondary schools admit that MT use has many pedagogical functions in EFL classes. However, they do not align with Mahmoud's conclusion (2012) that teachers should avoid using the MT in classes and use simplifying, miming, drawing, and acting to teach grammar inductively.

Conclusion

The findings above showed that although most of the investigated Saudi EFL preparatory-year beginners at Jazan University appreciate MT's various essential functions in EFL beginner classrooms, they realize it is not a suitable strategy for them when they reach higher levels in the English language education. The results also showed that although both teachers use MT to perform some teaching functions, they believe that teachers should control such use and that it should be only when necessary and for EFL beginners.

Implications, Recommendations, and Limitations

The above findings have practical implications for grammar EFL/ESL learning and teaching. For example, EFL grammar teachers for beginners might allow their students to use their MT in EFL classes to express their feelings and ideas clearly, understand the instructions and activities, and be comfortable interacting with teachers and colleagues. The teachers can also use the MT to clarify new vocabulary and grammatical structures and communicate effectively with their students in the classroom. However, both teachers and students should realize that this strategy should be limited, used only when necessary and at beginner levels. Also, curriculum designers might include practical Arabic guidelines for EFL students and in prescribed books to understand English grammar rules better. Moreover, English department administrators should realize the importance of incorporating some MT use into EFL classes and understand the bilingual teachers' inclination to use it in English classes.

The current research has some limitations:

1. It focused on only four beginner EFL classes and their two teachers. Future research can be conducted on a larger sample for greater generalizability of findings.
2. Due to the restriction of the research context, the researchers did not record the interviews or classroom interactions. Further research can utilize recorded interviews with teachers and students and recorded lessons to obtain more accurate and documented findings.
3. The present study was conducted in only one Saudi University. Further detailed classroom research in other Saudi universities could help support or reject the findings on MT inclusion in beginner EFL grammar classes in Saudi Arabia.

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References


### Appendix A: Students' questionnaire

Dear student,

This questionnaire aims to investigate your attitudes toward using Arabic in English classes. Your responses will be highly appreciated since they will help improve English language teaching and learning. There are no correct or wrong answers. Your answers will be used only for investigation purposes and will be highly confidential.

Section A:

Please choose ONE answer which best reflects your attitude to the given statement. You can add further comments about the statements in the boxes.

1. I prefer my teacher to use Arabic in English classes.
   A) Always         B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never

2. I feel comfortable when I talk to my teacher in Arabic.
   A) Always         B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never

3. I can understand the lesson much better if my teacher uses Arabic.
   A) Always         B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never

4. I prefer the teacher to use Arabic if the lesson is boring.
   A) Always         B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never

5. Arabic can help me to express my feelings and ideas that I cannot explain in English.
   A) Always         B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never

6. I prefer to ask my teacher questions in Arabic.
A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
7. I prefer to do an activity with a partner in Arabic.
A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
8. I understand new vocabulary only when I use a bilingual dictionary.
A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
9. The teacher should clarify difficult activities in Arabic.
A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
10. English grammar should be explained in Arabic.
    A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
11. New vocabulary should be translated into Arabic.
    A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
12. Class instructions should be given in Arabic.
    A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
13. I feel comfortable if exam instructions are given in Arabic.
    A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
14. It is necessary to explain the differences and similarities between Arabia and English in Arabic.
    A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never
15. Using Arabic prevents me from learning English.
    A) Always        B) Often              C) Sometimes        D) Rarely   E) Never

Section B:
1. Please write down the reasons that encourage you to use Arabic in English classes.
2. Please write down the reasons that encourage you to avoid using Arabic in English classes.
Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix B: Teachers' questionnaire

Name: ..................................................
Years of teaching experience: ......................
Dear teacher,
This qualitative questionnaire aims at investigating your perceptions of MT use in EFL classes. Your responses will help greatly improve English language teaching and learning. Your responses will be highly confidential and will be used only for research purposes.
1-Many language educators think that the mother tongue should be excluded from EFL classes. Do you agree?
2-Do you use Arabic in your classes? If so, for what purpose?
3- Do you think the amount of Arabic used in the classroom will affect your students' language proficiency level?
4- Do you think that using Arabic is a sign of less creative teaching?
5-Do you allow your students to use Arabic? Why / why not?
We appreciate your time and cooperation!
### Appendix C: Observation checklist 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the beginning of lectures</th>
<th>Lesson 1</th>
<th>Lesson 2</th>
<th>Lesson 3</th>
<th>Lesson 4</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chatting</td>
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<td>Class instructions</td>
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<td>Warm-up questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>During lectures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translating words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explaining grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translating sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarifying activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referring to bilingual dictionaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checking comprehension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>At the end of lectures</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Checking comprehension</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher’s use of Arabic in grammar classes**

Appendix D: Observation checklist 2

**Students' uses of Arabic in grammar classes**
### Appendix C: Teachers’ uses of MT in classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introducing</td>
<td>U 'arifkum bī Al-istādhah Khulūd أَعِقَمُ بَالإسْتَدِهَّة خَلْوَد</td>
<td>I introduced you to the teacher, Khulud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking questions</td>
<td>Lysh mā halītū Al-wājib لَيْشَ مَا حَلِيْتَو لَوْاجِب</td>
<td>Why didn't you do the homework?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fī Al-marah ily ūtat iysh akh dhnā فِي الْمَرَاح یَلْتَطَ یَسَ اَخْدِهَا</td>
<td>For the last lesson, what did we take?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hal hādhihi Al-af ‘āl tataghyar? هل هَذِه الْفَلْحَة غَيْرٌ؟</td>
<td>Do these verbs change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ma huwa Al-farq byna Al-māḍī Al-mustamir wa Al- māḍī Al-</td>
<td>What is the difference between past continuous tense and simple past tense?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the beginning of lectures

Greeting

Chatting

During lectures

Asking Questions

Working with peers

Using bilingual dictionaries

Showing understanding

Responding to teacher's questions

At the end of lectures

Asking questions
| **Replying questions** | **Student:** Mumkin titshar niqafil Al-mukayf? ممكن تتيشر نقفل المكيف؟  
Teacher: Idhā bardanīn tafū Al-mukayf إذا بردانين فعلاً لفظيَّ ف.  
**Student:** Is it possible, teacher, to turn off the AC?  
**Teacher:** If you feel cold, turn off the AC. |  
| **Giving instructions** | **Student:** Mumkin tītshar niqafil Al-mukayf؟ ممكن تتيشر نقفل المكيف؟  
**Teacher:** Idhā bardanīn tafū Al-mukayf إذا بردانين فعلاً لفظيَّ ف.  
**Student:** Is it possible, teacher, to turn off the AC?  
**Teacher:** If you feel cold, turn off the AC. |  
| **Verifying understanding** | **Student:** Mumkin tītshar niqafil Al-mukayf؟ ممكن تتيشر نقفل المكيف؟  
**Teacher:** Idhā bardanīn tafū Al-mukayf إذا بردانين فعلاً لفظيَّ ف.  
**Student:** Is it possible, teacher, to turn off the AC?  
**Teacher:** If you feel cold, turn off the AC. |  
| **Translating vocabulary** | **Student:** Mumkin tītshar niqafil Al-mukayf؟ ممكن تتيشر نقفل المكيف؟  
**Teacher:** Idhā bardanīn tafū Al-mukayf إذا بردانين فعلاً لفظيَّ ف.  
**Student:** Is it possible, teacher, to turn off the AC?  
**Teacher:** If you feel cold, turn off the AC. |  
| **Teacher:** Is it possible, teacher, to turn off the AC?  
**Teacher:** If you feel cold, turn off the AC. |  
| **Giving instructions** | **Student:** Mumkin tītshar niqafil Al-mukayf؟ ممكن تتيشر نقفل المكيف؟  
**Teacher:** Idhā bardanīn tafū Al-mukayf إذا بردانين فعلاً لفظيَّ ف.  
**Student:** Is it possible, teacher, to turn off the AC?  
**Teacher:** If you feel cold, turn off the AC. |  
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**Teacher:** If you feel cold, turn off the AC. |  
| **Teacher:** Is it possible, teacher, to turn off the AC?  
**Teacher:** If you feel cold, turn off the AC. |
Levels of Warning in the Text messages Sent by the Saudi Ministry of Health during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Received: 9/27/2021 Accepted: 11/12/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
With the beginning of the Corona pandemic at the beginning of 2019 and its rapid spread, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was among the countries that moved very quickly to address this matter. All state institutions played the role related to them. Saudi Ministry of Health launched an intensive package of warning, awareness, and guidance in the form of text messages through multiple electronic platforms to reach the largest segment of society. The study took three sources to collect data, three telecommunications companies, the official account of the Ministry of Health on Twitter and the official website of the Ministry. The current study was based on analyzing these messages in terms of warning levels in various speech acts according to the theories of Austin and Searle, in addition to analyzing the content in terms of its relationship to the actual text and the objective context. The study tried to seek the warning levels in the messages which were classified into three sections: high, moderate, and low and identified the types of actions that represent the levels. The significance of the study lies in revealing how language is used to raise the level of awareness in society. Based on the research methods, this study is analytical and descriptive, based on the theory of speech acts in its foundations, and the development of a reference model for analyzing warning levels that depend on the type of action and its implications, taking into account the indirect speech acts. The results of the study concluded that there is a clear discrepancy in the use of speech verbs to express the three levels of warning.

Keywords: Covid-19, levels of warning, Saudi Ministry of Health, speech acts, telecommunications, text messages, Twitter

Introduction

During the pandemic so-called COVID 19, which has occurred at the beginning of this century -21th, the shape of the whole world is not as before since it has immensely influenced social life that no such disease had done ever since the last five centuries. Economically, educationally, socially, and even politically, all nations around the world have been exposed to a great number of sequential changes. Life movement has been before all in the front to suffer from the bad influence of the pandemic. Almost all countries all over the Earth suffered from a terrifying death toll which resulted in harsh regulations authorities had to apply, among which were curfew and locking down regional areas, cities, and the whole country. The pandemic put all health institutions in front of real challenges and made them confront two issues death and life.

Generally, health and infection control institutions, pharmaceutical and biotechnology corporations were in a high alert; all were to work in their arenas to minimize the worst scenario the world may face in the future. If shedding light on health institutions liabilities, the most considerably important part was to raise the awareness of the coming danger among the community. Luckily, in the era of the enormous progress in technology, that matter was not a big dilemma. More specifically, the process of spreading societal awareness effectively took no more than seriously activating the use of social media.

In Saudi Arabia, the government was noticeably aware of the serious hazard of the pandemic right from the beginning when the first case was recorded March 2020. Particularly, the Ministry of health took the initiative and started to broadcast daily statements including the cases reported and the regulations of both the Ministry of interior and Ministry of health through the official Saudi TV channels. Shortly afterward, the Ministry of health took an outstanding step towards the release of awareness campaigns of the noble virus and official rules that mattered inconsistent with what each stage required. The step was an organized program of short system services (SMSs) being sent in the Arabic Language via Twitter, cell phones, and the official website of the Ministry.

The significance of the text messages lies in three things: the recurrent use, speed, and the possibility of reaching the largest segment of the society. Thus, this process started almost March/April 2020 and lasted up till now during which the Ministry of health released hundreds of messages. These messages carried a lot of important information about COVID 19, health advice and warnings, and general rules of how people were to change their lifestyle. Accordingly, the content of the text messages was being adapted and modified in consistent with the quick changes of the pandemic. As a result, there were several of linguistic constructions used to convey for instance, warning, threatening, advising, etc. Looking carefully at meaning construction, a message, no doubt, would have a certain meaning that has a certain impact on an addressee via language use. A very good example on that is warning as an illocutionary act is much stronger than advising or asserting (Searle, 1969).

This leads to the central subject of this paper through which the pragmatic meaning of the Saudi MOH text messages is discussed. It is, on the face of it, meaning that is very complex to be construed with its variations in the sense of meaning in using Thomas (1995), taking the furthest
point, the contrast between what seems on the surface and what lies in there, in the deep construction in relation to the context (Searle, 1979). On the other hand, since the discussion is about raising awareness of a serious pandemic, it is worthy of investigating the level of alerts in the sent instructional messages. The significance of this paper lies in the extent to which the levels of alerts of language used, supposedly, to raise awareness among people. Importantly, this paper seeks answers to questions: did Saudi MOH use high levels of alerts in the text messages? What was the representation of high levels of alerts? What kind of speech acts was used to serve the input of the instructions? Thus, this paper is an attempt to discover variations of speech acts ranging from the softness of instructions like asserting and advising to strongly worded ones, which have alarming consequences like warning and prohibition. In addition, what makes this paper distinguishing is its attempt to apply the theory of speech acts on written texts. This move was supported by the principles of the theory itself and a study on written advertisements based on speech acts (Kadri & Abd Razak, 2018; Naufalina, 2017; Simona & Dejica-Cartisa, 2015).

Literature Review

Pragmatics

For decades, (meaning) as the core of a communicative event has been a field of question in linguistics and thus the work had to explore ample evidence about how people communicate meaning via language. In late 20th century when pragmatics became a formal field in linguistics, see for example Davis (1991), the linguistic pioneers started to devote outstanding work to the use of utterances, vs. sentences, that are associated to speaker’s meaning.

As a starting point to the literature review, it is significant to present what is meant by pragmatics in a very brief way. For instance, Thomas (1995) believed that pragmatics is meaning in use or meaning in context. The modern term of pragmatics was first traced back to Morris in 1938, it addresses the relation of signs to users and interpreters (Horn & Ward, 2006, as cited, Morris 1938). Levinson (1983) says that Charles was interested in studying signs being a scientific field called semiotics, “the study of the relation of signs to interpreters” (p. 1). For instance, the interpretation of the pronoun (you) depends on the real context rather than if read on a book or the like. Charles Morris maintained that certain expressions like interjections "Oh", and orders "come here", others "Good morning" exist only in specific situations. More interestingly, pragmatics deals with all aspects of semiosis "signs and images" when they are in use (Levinson, 1983). Pragmatics is the study of meaning in context. It investigates inferences approached by listeners to interpret what is communicated by speakers; in other words, how a speaker expresses the unsaid in what is actually said. There is always more to be communicated in one single linguistic form. For instance, by asking “what is the time?”, is not necessarily interpreted as a question that seeks information about the time.

This overriding field “pragmatics” emerged considerable perspectives about how language is used and processed to convey different meanings in different contexts. The main goal was bridging the gap that might occur between the phonological representation and speaker’s intentional meaning which semantics and syntax could not fill for a long time. The bridging process was operated by many frameworks and theories that have had practical values so far. More specifically, in 1950s Paul Grice was first who discussed meaning when a speaker means more than what he/she says through the theory of implicatures, and during the 1930s up to the 1960s Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, John Austin and John Searle went with Grice on the
same track and developed *speech acts theory* (Huang, 2017). However, there are more areas determined in the arena of pragmatics i.e. presupposition, deixis, and relevance theory.

**Speech Acts Theory: Brief Theoretical Background**

This theory was established by John Austin in the middle of 1950s. The basic principle of Austin’s is “how to do things with words”. In the beginning he distinguishes between two main verbs: constatives and performatives. The point here is that these verbs have certain characteristics; one characteristic is that when one says (the verb) he performs an act. It is not necessary to perform it physically but to perform the act itself. At the beginning, one condition was stated to test the verb; it should pass the use of (hereby). However, his theory ended up in the assumption that all verbs can perform actions under certain conditions and rules, and performatives changed into speech acts. The theory attempted to establish practical principles by originating the felicity conditions.

**Felicity conditions**

Felicity conditions are described by Levinson (1983).

- There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.
- The circumstances and persons must be appropriate to the procedure.
- The procedure must be correct and complete.
- The participants must have the required thoughts, feelings, and intentions as specified in the procedure. (p.229)

In the same vein, Cutting (2002) identifies the felicity conditions and the general conditions in a more explicit description:

_A- According to Austin, felicity conditions are:_

- Each participant knows his role and recognizes the context.
- The action should be performed completely.
- All participants should have the intention to perform the action.

_B- According to Searle, there are general conditions applied to all speech acts:_

- The addressee must hear and understand the code.
- The speaker must be in a real context; not having a role in a play, for instance.

Consistent with the above illustration, Levinson (1983) merely adds "both speaker and addressee", and they must be conscious and normal human beings.

_A-Felicitous request according to felicity conditions, (Johnstone, 2002; Cutting, 2002; Levinson, 1983)._ 

- Context is recognized by all parties; the action, place, code, meaning.
- The roles of participants are recognized.
- The participants have the right intentions.
- The speaker must trust the hearer that the latter would do the action.
- The speaker wants something to take place in the future; *propositional content condition._
- The speaker believes that the hearer "requestee" is able to do the action; *preparatory condition._
- The hearer will not do the action unless he is asked to do it; *preparatory condition._
• The speaker is sincere; he wants the request to be understood and done as a request; *sincerity condition.*
• The speaker attempts to get the hearer doing the action; *essential condition.*

*B-Felicitous question according to felicity conditions*
Schiffrin (1994) states these conditions as follows:
• Proposition or propositional function; propositional content. (Textual content)
• The speaker does not know the "answer"; he lacks information that completes his proposition (interrogatives are incomplete propositions in case of open questions Schiffrin (1994), or he wants to make sure whether his proposition is true (in case of closed questions, Schiffrin (1994); *Preparatory condition.* (Background circumstances)
• The speaker wants this information, *sincerity condition.* (Psychological state)
• The speaker attempts to get the information from the hearer, *essential condition.* (Illocutionary point of what is said)

It might be beneficial to mention two aspects of speech acts theory; that are *explicit performatives* and *implicit performatives.* I will elect an example from Levinson's book to explain the idea. To differentiate between the two types of performatives, let's consider the following example:

*I promise I will be there*

The verb (promise) is performative, "I promise" means I do something. "I will be there" is the promise and it is the implicit performative. If I say "I will be there" it is still performing and that is implicit. What comes after the performative verb is the implicit speech act and the explicit is the performative verb itself.

**Kinds of Acts**

Levinson (1983) illustrates the kinds of acts based on Austin's model to speech acts theory:  
**Locutionary act:** the utterance itself.  
**Illocutionary act:** the act one intends to perform, like "I will come" the act is "you are promising", that is the act. That is the force or the act. The intention of the speaker by the utterance and the *intention in this case is the act* like promising, threatening, judging.  
**Perlocutionary act:** the effect on the hearer.

Clarifying the notion behind illocutionary act, it would be necessary to refer to Cutting’s exact words “this is the illocutionary force ‘what is done in uttering the words’, the function of the words, the specific purpose that the speakers have in mind” (Cutting, 2002, p. 16).

Important to mention here is that perlocutionary can be unintended in that how can one determine the effect on the hearer intentionally? In this case he may produce an effect on the hearer which is not intended. Therefore, perlocutionary act is not systematic. This is the beginning of theory established in the 50s. Then Grice posited the theory of conversational implicatures in which intentional meaning is highly activated rather than non-intentional meaning, (Levinson, 1983). Relevant to the above kinds of acts is the concept of *uptake.* The assumption is that consequences should be verified or ratified in illocutionary act. For example, when I say "I bet you" then you have to say something for example "I accept it" and to perform
the uptake, then, it requires that you understand the illocutionary act of the utterance. Perlocutionary act is necessary to occur to evaluate the illocutionary level of one's act. In this regard, it is essential to differentiate between two main prototypes of acts relevant to semantics and pragmatics; these are direct speech act "semantic reference" and indirect speech act "with reference to pragmatics", (Fromkin & Rodman, 1993; Whitney, 1998). For example, if S says, "can you close the door?" and the H does not do anything, so what is the effect? Definitely H understands what S means regardless he does or not. This example can be a request and it can be a question. On the one hand, although the linguistic structure and syntactic properties of the example reveal a question form, it carries a connotative sense of request; that is the illocutionary act; explicitly founded as indirect speech act. The indirect speech act in the above example is the requesting. On the other hand, the direct speech act in this case is asking a question. The question is asking about the ability of the hearer. So, if the H says "yes I can" and does nothing, it means that he understands the meaning as interrogation; that is the semantic meaning. The effect is only if the H understands what is meant by "close the door", if I didn’t close the door, it cannot be suggested that the effect occurred. More explicitly, if the H understands the utterance as a request, then the interaction is successful.

Five kinds of action

Representatives: i.e., claiming, predicting, asserting and concluding.
Directives: i.e., ordering, requesting, and questioning
Commissives: i.e., promising, threatening, offering
Expressives: i.e., thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating
Declarations: i.e., declaring war, firing from employment

In a more explicit view, representatives (assertives) are when S commits to a true A, directives are when S attempts to have H do A for his/her best interest, commissives are when S commits to a future A, expressives are when S expresses some psychological conditions, and declarations are when S intends to make changes in the institutional affairs, (Levinson, 1983).

Methods
The nature of the current research is consistent with analytic and descriptive methodologies. The paradigm used to analyze and describe the data was stemmed and developed from Austin and Searle’s framework of speech acts theory. The main purpose of the current research is to explore the levels of alerts the MOH employed to increase the awareness of danger about COVID19. Thus, the research adapted the qualitative method since it attempted to interpret the content meaning of the text messages, Abu Allam (2007). However, numbers and means were used to explain differences among the levels of alerts.

The Research Paradigm
The research paradigm “instrument, if possible, to name” was designed to meet the main purpose of this paper. Therefore, the performative verbs were the targeted contents. Accordingly, the paradigm consists of three levels of suppositional forces (high, moderate, low). The high level of alerts is represented mainly by directives and declarations. The moderate level of alerts is represented mainly by directives of another type of performatives. The low level of alerts is represented mainly by representatives. There are two types of macro-functions related to language functions and accordingly to speech acts discussed by Brown and Yule (1983). They
divided the functions to transactional in which the function of language is embedded in the content of the linguistic expression, and interactional in which the function is involved in the context surrounding the text, social, and personal aspects. Hence, it was worthy of enriching the paradigm by discussing these two types of language functions.

The paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suppositional Forces</th>
<th>Class of Speech Acts</th>
<th>Paradigm Cases</th>
<th>Exampless</th>
<th>Macrom-Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High alerts</td>
<td>Directive s</td>
<td>Warning, Forbidding, Commanding (Ordering)</td>
<td>Health announces 58 new deaths, bringing total deaths</td>
<td>Transactional, Interactional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Declarations</td>
<td>Declaration s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate alerts</td>
<td>Directive s</td>
<td>Inviting, Requesting, Questioning Advising, Suggesting</td>
<td>Please register now to get the vaccine. فتحلا سرخاً الآن لأخذ لللقاح.</td>
<td>Transactional, Interactional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representatives</td>
<td>Claiming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low alerts</td>
<td>Representatives</td>
<td>Claiming, Describing, Hypothesizing Predicting</td>
<td>Sitting at home limits the spread of the new Corona virus. جلوسك في المنزل يحد من تفشى فيروس كورونا الجديد.</td>
<td>Transactional, Interactional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directive s</td>
<td>Requesting Advising Inviting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rationale behind the sorting of the alert levels comes from the baseline of verb meanings. For instance, **advising** someone demands nothing to be followed immediately but it is upon the addressee’s will either to commit him/her-self to it or not. Contrary to that, **ordering** or **warning** someone, for instance, necessitates considerable awareness that the addressee should commit to do whatever it takes to avoid harmful consequences. Bataineh and Aljamal (2014) “reports that the act of **warning** should be identified through the intention to warn (i.e., the intention to make somebody aware of danger)” (as cited in Allwood, 1977, p. 55). **Advising** is likely seen as a weak force of directives because it only suggests some future actions the speaker thinks it would be for the benefit of the addressee, (Searle, 1969). Interestingly, (executives) according to Austin’s model is the practices of “powers & influence”, for instance …**warning**, and the like, (Al-Hindawi, Al-Masu’di & Mirza, 2014, p. 29). Instances below clarify the difference among the three types of speech acts with respect to high, moderate, and low alerts. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions, for example, low alert existed in form of order as in:

Levels of Warning in the Text messages Sent by the Saudi Ministry of Health

Alhabuobi

“Find out the latest updates of the emerging corona virus by following the account of the National Center for Disease Prevention and trusted official bodies”.

Instance (1)

A text message by the Minister of Health Dr. Alrabiah through Twitter:

ابحذروا يقبلون أو غارق الأطفال فسياسء من أحد مضيفي مسيحة ولم تستقبل أعراف من الفيروس للذاوية ورجل وراه وبهدية.

Beware of kissing or cuddling children, although their infection is mild or without symptoms, but they transmit the infection strongly.

According to the Arabic version, the precise lexical meaning of the verb (احذروا) introduces warning although its syntactic form refers to ordering. This relationship between the two aspects of language evokes explicit and implicit speech acts, namely direct and indirect speech acts. On the one hand, any Arabic speaker would understand the verb as “warning” even if it is given in an imperative mode. On the other hand, this mixture of direct and indirect acts empowers the content in the sense that the speaker still commits to the intention to warn. It is important to note that the speaker might resort to this way of warning to avoid imposition or threat. So, instead of saying “I warn you not to kiss children….” (طفال لأأحذركم بعدم تقبيل أطفالك)، which can be understood as a sort of threat, he chose to use “beware”.

Important question is rising; do the acts discussed in this paper meet felicity conditions? Referring to the framework of speech acts theory, 1- All participants were aware of the situation (the existence of COVID), appropriate to the procedure and are human beings: the speaker (the Saudi minister of health) and the addressees (the Saudi and non-Saudi people). 2- The event was real, there was a real pandemic, and it was not i.e., a play in a theater. 3- The speaker, in such a serious circumstance, certainly had the intention to warn the people about the critical situation. 4- The speaker used the appropriate words of warning followed by hazardous consequences that were “transmission of the infection”, i.e., “if you kiss children, you get infected” and “children transmit infection strongly”. 5- The code “language” used was recognized by people, it is important to mention that each message sent via cell phones had two versions: Arabic and English. And there are a lot of tweets in English found on this application for addressing non-Arabic speakers.

Instance (2)

Please register now to get the vaccine.

لأتمل الباطن الآن لأخذ اللقاح.

This text message represents a moderate level of alerts by using (now) which indicates that people should get vaccinated immediately. The verb (register) commits the hearer to do an action in the future. The (command verb, register لسجل) carries meaning of alert because it pushes forward to taking the vaccine, the action that could prevent from being infected. However, the use of the interjection before the command verb (please ف أو) signals a polite request which lowers down the level of alert to moderate.

Instance (3)

Sitting at home limits the spread of the new Corona virus.
As a low level of alerts, it clear that this utterance has a claiming (assertive) or so-called representative mode of speech act by using the verb “limit” “يحد”. Essentially, the intentional meaning of the verb is to state the fact that if you don’t stay at home the pandemic will spread; another sort of alert.

Although representatives were considered as a low alert in describing MOH messages, but some messages were found having high tone of alert such as:

**Instance (4)**

عندما تكون حالات فيروس كورونا: على الأطباء والأفراد الذين يصابون بالذوبانه أو في الأماكن العامة أو الأفراد الذين يتعرضون للذوبان

Coronavirus modes of transmission:

Respiratory droplets from a cough or sneeze, touching your face after touching contaminated surfaces, or direct contact with someone who is infected.

MOH

To test the felicity condition in instances (two through four), it is only to use the same procedures in instance (1) which shows again that felicity conditions are met in both of them.

The transactional function was served in all above instances. The morphophonological and syntactic structures showed that the semantic meaning was pinned linguistically to accomplish the purpose of the sentences. On the other hand, the interactional function appeared clearly in all instances as well. It is unlikely to separate the context from the transactional function to recognize the pragmatic meaning of the speech acts intentionally planted to raise awareness and alerts in the community. The was proved by the strong meaning of the verbs like commands. Saying for instance (wear the mask in the public places) cannot be understood as an informative construction only. The recognition of the events around the individuals, social attitudes, and institutional rules are factors of interpreting why and when to wear the mask.

**Data Collection**

The data was the content of text messages employed by the Saudi Ministry of Health MOH. They were collected from two channels. The first channel was the text messages sent to cell phones through the telecommunication companies approaching their business in Saudi Arabia STC, Mobily and Zain. The second channel was the messages sent by the minister through the Twitter platform. The data of this paper was between March 2020 when the first cases of corona appeared in the Kingdom, until August 28th, 2021. As for the data across the telecommunication companies, the researcher collected over 188 messages from 51 persons living in Almadinah Almunawarrah, Jeddah, Riyadh, Eastern Region, and Yanbu. The companies were STC, Mobily, and Zain. The data collected from Twitter platform was 701 messages. The data collected from the Ministry of Health website was 67 messages. The overall number of messages from all resources was 956 text messages.
Table 1. Distribution of messages on resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell phone messages</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>MOH</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>188</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Procedures**

The purpose of this paper is to identify how the MOH raised awareness across the whole Saudi nation through alerts spread in text messages. The first step was to approach discourse analysis to several text messages from different channels to test the possibility of applying the speech acts framework as a model to investigate the levels of alerts. Based on the data of the discourse analysis and literature review, modeling procedures were set up to build the research paradigm used for data analysis. Meanwhile, data were being collected from different resources as mentioned in the previous section. Then the data was sorted and analyzed according to the research paradigm. Finally, the results were discussed using some numeric measurements like numbers and means to explore the size of each level of alerts. Refer to Appendix A.

Important to mention that in some circumstances, there may not be clear cut between suggesting or advising and commanding. This is a defect that speech acts theory doesn’t present a linguistic remedy but likely it introduces a way for using the context to interpret the intended meaning. Thus, the researcher tried hard to adhere to the patterns of the performative verbs like (advise and stick) and activate the context role. In instance five below, the message has the expression “go immediately” which shows a direct order linked to the previous information, it is likely considered a high warning because the act is not intended to advise or suggest. Another important point is the considerable number of verbs which occur in the Arabic language in formula like (لا تتخالط، لا تسافر) were found in the data. These verbs in such formula are considered prohibitions in negative imperative, (Al-Hindawi1, Al-Masu’di1, & Mirza, 2014).

Instance (5)

Do you feel any of these symptoms? High temperature, shortness of breath, chest pain, cough, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of sense of smell and taste, go immediately to the nearest reassuring clinic.

Example (6) below shows through the context that it is an invitation to provide information even though the verb is in the imperative form.

Instance (6)

Learn about the new Corona virus through the link

The research has identified the type of actions that determine warning levels to achieve credibility in the results of the analysis. The researcher also took into account indirect speech acts very little for the same reason above. The table below shows a group of verbs and their connotations in the warning levels established in this research.
Table 2. Connotations of verbs in the warning levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High alert verbs</th>
<th>Moderate alert verbs</th>
<th>Low alert verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻣﺤﺪ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﻢﻨﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻢﻨﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻢﻨﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
<td>ﻧﺤﻖ ﺍﻟﻤﺤﺪ ﻋﻨﺎد ﺍﻟﻀﺮا ﻟﻠﻠﻠﻴن</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

This section displays the results of the analysis of the text messages according to the levels of alerts determined in the paradigm of the research. Means and numbers were used to explore the differences among the levels of alerts that the messages had according to the performative verbs.

Table 3. Frequencies of alert levels on cell phones messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suppositional forces</th>
<th>Telecommunication companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High alert</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate alert</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low alert</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table three showed results of the messages that were collected from telecommunication companies. The analyzed data illustrate that 54.25% (102) of all messages indicated that they carried a high alert content about the pandemic represented by speech acts, contrary to 29.78% (56) which carried a moderate alert and 15.95% (30) carried a low alert.

Table 4. Frequencies of alert levels on Twitter Platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suppositional forces</th>
<th>Twitter Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High alert</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate alert</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low alert</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table four showed high differences in readings. The results of the messages were collected from Twitter platform. The analyzed data illustrate that 86.59% (602) of all messages indicated that they carried a high alert content about the pandemic represented by speech acts, contrary to only 5.99% (42) which carried a moderate alert and 8.13% (57) carried a low alert.
Table 5. Frequencies of alert levels on MOH website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suppositional forces</th>
<th>MOH website</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High alert</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate alert</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low alert</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table five showed the results of the messages that were collected from the official site of the Saudi Ministry of Health. The analyzed data illustrate that 52.23% (35) of all messages indicated that they carried a high alert content about the pandemic represented by speech acts, contrary to 23.88% (16) which carried a moderated alert and 23.88% (16) carried a low alert.

Table 6. Frequencies of overall alert levels of all data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell phone messages</th>
<th>Twitter messages</th>
<th>MOH messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le</td>
<td>Le</td>
<td>Le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi</td>
<td>Hi</td>
<td>Hi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mo</td>
<td>Mo</td>
<td>Mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo</td>
<td>Lo</td>
<td>Lo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tot</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tot</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tot</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Overall messages distribution on levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of alerts</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>77.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>11.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>10.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>956</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables six and seven indicate that of all messages, high level alerts took the first place in the data. The analyzed data illustrate that 77.30% (739) of all messages were of a high alert content contrary to 11.92% (114) of a moderated alert and 10.77% (103) of a low alert.

Table 8. Distribution of types of performatives on High Level Alert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performative type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forbidding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>16.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requesting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inviting</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claiming</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaring</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>73.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab World English Journal  
ISSN: 2229-9327
Table eight reveals that the highest percentage of actions used at this level were from declaration actions and amounted to 73.74% of the total messages at this level. While the lowest percentage was in the acts of forbidding (prevention), and it amounted to less than 1% of the total messages.

Table 9. Distribution of types of performatives on Moderate level alert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performative type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inviting</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requesting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claiming</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissive (Promising)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table nine indicates that the highest percentage of actions used at this level were from invitation actions and amounted to 31.57% of the total messages at this level. While the lowest percentage was in the acts of suggesting and promising, and they amounted 1% of the total messages.

Table 10. Distribution of types of performatives on Low Level Alert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performative type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claiming</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>57.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inviting</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requesting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 indicates that the highest percentage of actions used at this level was from claiming actions and amounted to 57.28% of the total messages at this level, while the lowest percentage was in the acts of predicting, and it amounted only 1% of the total messages.

Discussion
In this section we discuss the most important results of the research as described in the results section. The text messages used by the Ministry of Health contained three different levels of warning but in different proportions. More detailedly, the messages used in telecommunications companies carried a 54% high warning compared to the low warning of only 15%. The difference in warning levels on the Twitter platform has increased, with the high warning reaching 86% of all messages compared to the average warning and the low warning of less than 10%. The messages on the official website of the Ministry of Health reached a high warning level of 52% of the total messages compared to the average and low warning, which amounted to less than 10% each. More importantly, the results indicated that of the total number of messages,
the high warning level was the most used in text messages, which was 77.30% compared to the other two levels, which was only 10.77%.

The concept of warning and its linguistic use can be used in different linguistic compositions as well as the meaning of these compositions. Looking at the theory of implicatures and theory speech acts, the intentional meaning of the speaker may appear in direct or indirect form, (Mey, 2001). He therefore considered that the actions of speech in both forms represent the first stage of the use of language, with the tacit meaning of communication coming in the second phase. This theoretical principle is consistent with the research outcomes. In example seven, the direct performative (order and leave) acts refer to commanding, however, it cannot be understood as an order because of the propositions lying in the overall message give vivid indications that the message provides some advice for the good of the addressees. Mey asserts that people do not usually say for example “I invite you” but the proposition is usually set in the utterance and understood with the help of the context.

Instance (7)
لا تكونوا مسؤولين لاتطلبوا للزم ولخلال الكماليات، الوقاية من كورونا.

Because you are responsible, order the necessary and leave the luxuries, prevention of corona

More instances represent the same idea:
(8) Commanding refers to request AND/OR invitation
اعرف آخر تحديثات فيروس كورونا المتجدد من خلال متابعة جلسات المركز الوطني للوقاية من الأمراض والإنجازات لاجتيازات المؤشرات.

Find out the latest updates of the emerging corona virus by following the account of the National Center for Disease Prevention and trusted official bodies.

(9) Claiming refers to invitation
عدوى كورونا ستتوقف جراءات الوقائيه!

Corona infection will stop, God willing, by our commitment to all preventive measures!

(10) commanding refers to advice
استمتع فلا تنسى التّابعات الوقائيه!

Enjoy your time and don’t forget the precautions
Mask, safe distance, sterilize hands

The researcher believes, through analyzing the data, that the Ministry of Health has succeeded in formulating its messages with a level of warning consistent with the size of the pandemic, and that the messages mostly depend on the pattern of high warning, on the one hand. But at the same time, the messages were characterized by a language free of threats, violence, or intimidation to preserve the psychological integrity of the community and maintain a pattern of good relationship between them and the members of the community to complement their awareness and service role.

احذروا الأطفال
Beware of kissing children.

We warn you to kiss children
In Example 11, the message contains an act that commits the recipient to do an action and the results of this action are for his benefit and the benefit of those around him. As for example 12, the verb (we warn you) obliges the speaker to do something in the future against the recipient in case the latter does not abide by the instructions. This claim is consistent with Yule’s claim (1996) in that indirect speech acts “are generally associated with greater politeness in English than direct speech acts” (p. 56).

The results of the sample analysis indicated that the MOH messages were characterized by a distinct type of linguistic expression, which clearly indicates a high level of warning. Nevertheless, it turned out that this type of message did not contain the verb (to warn) with a linguistic connotation, such as (health warns you), but was replaced by the phrase (the danger increases). In example (13) (The risk of infection with the Corona virus increases in crowded places) is equivalent to (I warn you that the crowded places are dangerous).

Instance (13)

اخي المصلح، يوجد خطر الإصابة بالفيروس كورونا في المزدحمة
My praying brother: The risk of infection with the Corona virus increases in crowded places

This issue was discussed by Austin (1962) who confirmed that the expression of warning is not necessarily by using the word that contains the verb (I warn you). For example (The bull is dangerous) carries the same warning of (I warn you that the bull is dangerous).

Outcomes indicated that the highest percentage of acts used at this level were from declaration and amounted to 73.74 % of the total messages at this level. The results are consistent with the Bataineh and Aljamal (2014) whose samples use declaration to express warning. While the lowest percentage was in the acts of forbidding (prevention), and it amounted to less than 1 % of the total messages. In this context, the results are largely consistent with the model that was prepared for data analysis. At the higher level of warning, the command act elicits a higher rate, for example, than the act of requesting, inviting, and advising. Doing an order fits the context of a higher-level warning than, say, an act of advice. On the other hand, the act of prohibition was received only once from the total messages of the Ministry of Health, and this may indicate the unwillingness of administrators to use threatening language with citizens, which may be the authority of other government agencies “(…) who classifies warning under exercitives in which one exercises the power, right and influence over another” (Bataineh & Aljamal, 2014, p. 87). And the act of prohibition came with a very important topic, which is violating the quarantine that exposes society to the spread of the virus as shown in instance 14.

Instance (14)

صونا للصحة العامة، ووقاية من فايروس كورونا، يُحظر انتهاك أحكام الحجر الصحي - الموجهة من قبل الجهات المختصة - من قبل المصابين بالفيروس كورونا، أفرادهم أو الأشخاص الذين اتصلوا بهم أو الذين يشتبه في إصابتهم، تحت طائلة المساءلة الجزائية المغلظة.

In order to preserve public health and prevent the spread of the Corona virus, it is prohibited to violate the quarantine provisions - issued by the competent authority - by those infected with the Corona virus, those who are in contact with them, or those suspected of being infected, under penalty of strict criminal liability.
At the same high level of warning, the Ministry of Health used the act of declaration and announcement in a very important context; this claim is supported by Al-Shafie and Al-Jubbory (2015) who asserted that warning can be expressed through announcement. It achieved a message to the audience that is very high in its warning meaning and at the same time free from the acts of command and prohibition that oblige the listener to follow and make him liable for punishment in case of violation. Announcing the numbers of deaths and critical cases on a daily basis undoubtedly raises the degree of warning and awareness in society of the seriousness of the pandemic by using indirect speech acts. This analysis is supported by Hussein and Khalaf (2018) who claim that prohibition is clearly directive whereas warning can be expressed through assertion.

As for the average warning level, the results indicated that the verbs used are commensurate with the level that was used as a model for research and analysis. The acts of advising and inviting achieved the highest rates at this level, which indicates the compatibility between the level of warning and the meaning of the acts. It seems that the Ministry, through this method, wanted to raise awareness in a different and effective way that relies on soft language. As for the low level of warning, the analysis of the data indicated that the results were largely consistent with the study model. The results showed that more than half of the messages were based on the claim actions. This type of action means presenting and commenting on facts, and this method is consistent with the goal of raising social awareness in a manner that does not depend on a loud warning. At the same time, it can raise the degree of awareness in the society through stating facts about the pandemic.

Conclusion

The current study concluded several matters related to the warning language used by the Saudi Ministry of Health during the Corona pandemic. The Ministry of Health has used various types of verbs of speech for the purpose of warning and awareness, ranging from the use of verbs of direct warning to indirect warning. Warning levels in text messages varied across the three warning levels. One of the most important findings of this study is that the high levels of warning in text messages are largely in line with the main issue of the Ministry of Health, which is the warning of the spread of the virus in society and the seriousness of the pandemic.

As for the other levels, they were compatible with the awareness aspect and the dissemination of health culture through the utilization of speech acts that varied between advice, description and request, then calling for the adoption of health measures that preserve the safety of individuals. On the other hand, the number of messages broadcast by the Ministry on the three platforms under study amounted to approximately 1,000 messages during about a year and a half, the time period taken by the research to collect data. It is also noted that there are a significant number of warning messages that came in the vernacular Saudi dialect instead of using the classical Arabic language, and this may be attributed to the simulation of the psychological aspect of individuals.

Recommendations

The researcher thinks that the importance of the study is not only in its results, but it can be a very important starting point for conducting other research based on this research. Including, for example, measuring individuals’ understanding of the three levels of warning, comparing the level of warning with the topics of messages, and studying the impact of text messages on
community awareness during the pandemic. On the other hand, the researcher recommends conducting a similar study on the messages of the Ministry of Interior and Hajj and comparing the levels of warning and awareness among these three parties.

About the Author

**Dr. Thanaa Abdulrazzaq Alhabuobi** is an assistant professor at Taibah University in Almadinah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The researcher obtained a master's degree in methods of teaching English from Taibah University and a doctorate in applied linguistics from King Saud University in Riyadh / Saudi Arabia. The researcher is interested in issues of English language and linguistics in general and the fields of discourse analysis and pragmatics in particular. 

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References


Appendix A

Examples of the verbs appeared in the text messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locutionary act</th>
<th>Levels of alerts in the illocutionary act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The vaccine greatly reduces the incidence of infection</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not leaving a safe distance increases your risk of injury</td>
<td>Mode rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a blood pressure patient develops corona, it increases heart stress and weakens the immune system</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inviting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table above lists examples of verbs used in text messages and their corresponding levels of alerts in the illocutionary act.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| "الإهمال للتعليمات الوقائية قد يكون سبباً في إصابة و муانة أهل بيتك و من هم حولك.
لذا ننصح ب "لبس الكمامة، ترك مسافة آمنة بينك و بين آخر.
"الإهمال للتعليمات الوقائية قد يكون سبباً في إصابة و معانة أهل بيتك و من هم حولك.
لذا ننصح ب "لبس الكمامة، ترك مسافة آمنة بينك و بين آخر.
| Your neglect of the preventive instructions may cause injury and suffering to your family and those around you.
Therefore, we advise to "wear a mask, stay safe!"
| Questioning |
| "تذكر أن يوم الابحاث ينطلق باليوم الذي نعجز فيه.
فيما إذا حالنا الاجراءات الوقائية، لن نضمن سلامتك.
"Injuries will decrease, and the spread of infection will decrease, when we cooperate, we do not neglect washing hands.
Let’s stick to precautions together to ensure our safety.
| Inviting |
| "وزارة الصحة تهيب بالجميع بسرعة الحصول على اللقاح للحماية من تداعيات المرض.
The Ministry of Health calls on everyone to quickly get the vaccine to protect against the repercussions of the disease.
| Requesting |
| "آهالي الأمهات للوقاية قلوب فين يقع "بلاسر" نقل الأمهات من مولك.
"The infection increases in gatherings, your mask determines your position, are you the curve that raises it, or the curve that prevents it?"
<p>| Advising |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Warning</th>
<th>Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forbidding</strong></td>
<td>In order to preserve public health and prevent the spread of the Corona virus, it is prohibited to violate the quarantine provisions - issued by the competent authority - by those infected with the Corona virus, those who are in contact with them, or those suspected of being infected, under penalty of strict criminal liability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commanding</strong></td>
<td>If you have been in contact with a case infected with “Covid-19”, do not attend any gathering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warning</strong></td>
<td>Shopping is fun, don't make it a curse! Be very careful in your actions and all your dealings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>الدعوة إلى الصورة: إذا كنت مخالفاً لحالة مصابة بال&quot;كوفيد-19&quot; فلا تحضر أي تجمع.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forbidding If you have been in contact with a case infected with “Covid-19”, do not attend any gathering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commanding Shopping is fun, don't make it a curse! Be very careful in your actions and all your dealings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<td>If you have been in contact with a case infected with “Covid-19”, do not attend any gathering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warning</strong></td>
<td>Shopping is fun, don't make it a curse! Be very careful in your actions and all your dealings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Declaration</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health announces the registration of (1334) new cases of coronavirus (Covid-19), and the registration of (18) deaths, may God have mercy on them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Claiming</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corona virus infection is transmitted through flying droplets after sneezing or coughing, touching surfaces and tools, then touching the face, direct contact with infected people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Impact of Learning Environment on EFL Students’ Academic Achievement: A study of Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Academic Achievement

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Abstract
It is worth pointing out that learning a foreign language in a multicultural context is a long and complex undertaking. Several factors influence whether or not English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students can accurately perceive and produce the foreign language. These variables can potentially contribute to the success and, or failure in learning and acquiring a foreign language. Given the Moroccan educational system, the research provided minimal insight into the relationship between those factors and language achievement. The present study’s aim, therefore, was to investigate the environmental factors that affect students’ academic performance. It also aimed to find out how these variables affect students’ academic achievements. To achieve this aim, data have been collected via open-ended questionnaires, and interviews addressed mainly to First Year Students of Master Programs, Department of English, FLDM, USMBA-Fez. The findings have shown that students’ academic achievements were significantly positively/negatively linked with the environmental factors, namely societal, home/family and school/classroom variables. The findings also revealed that the more highly sophisticated the social environment is, the more likely it is to foster EFL students’ academic achievements. In addition, the more similarity exists between the students’ cultures, the more successful the learning is. This study also showed that the development of EFL proficiency is a product of contextual factors influence. As such, the study concludes with several implications that brought up for possible effective change in the future to enhance the learning environment atmosphere, boost students’ academic achievements, and, therefore, achieve better results.

Keywords: academic achievement, culture, EFL Morrocan students learning environment, social factors

Cite as: AMIRI, E., & EL KARFA, A. (2021). The Impact of Learning Environment on EFL students’ Academic Achievement: A study of Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Academic Achievement. Arab World English Journal, 12 (4) 387-400. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.25
Introduction:
In the last few decades, the ever-increasing need for the best communication skills in foreign languages in general and English, in particular, has created a massive demand for English teaching around the world (Richards, 2006). The classroom environment in Moroccan higher institutions is a place that brings students belonging to different Moroccan regions, practicing different lifestyles, from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. There is a great mingling of cultures, and this has some of its adverse effects. Learning a foreign language in a multicultural context, therefore, is a long and complex undertaking. Several factors influence whether or not EFL students can perceive and produce the foreign language accurately. Hence, multiple factors come to influence the academic performance of the students. The process of acquiring and learning a foreign language is significantly affected by many factors. As such, scholars and experts in the field of education classified them into internal and external variables. These factors have either positive or negative correlations with the student’s quality of achievement.

In this context, the present study investigates the environmental factors that affect students’ academic achievements. It also aims to find out how these variables affect students’ academic achievements.

The study attempts to answer the following questions:
1. What are the environmental factors that affect EFL students’ academic achievements?
2. To what extent do the environmental factors affect EFL students’ academic achievements?
3. What are the impacts of the environmental factors on EFL students’ academic achievements?

Utilizing a mixed-method approach, the current research examines the effect, which several environmental variables have upon learning English as a foreign language among master students at USMBA, FLDM- Fez. In this context, the present study investigates the environmental factors that affect students’ academic achievements. It also aims to find out how these variables affect students’ academic achievements.

Literature Review
Learning Environment/Context
For a better understanding of the theoretical issues in the influence of the environmental factors on EFL students’ academic achievement, it is of crucial importance to shed some light on definitions that attributed to the term ‘learning environment.’ Although definitions and perspectives on the learning environment vary widely, most experts on the topic agreed that it includes school learning spaces, home learning spaces, and community learning spaces. According to the Glossary of Education Reform, the learning environment consists of backgrounds, conditions, circumstances, framework, setting, or situation. That is, it has societal, home/family, and school/classroom variables. It encompasses and extends the culture of a school or class to cover a wide variety of settings and protects the outdoor environment taking into account the vital role of emotions in learning. Learning environments, thus, have both a direct and indirect influence on students’ academic achievement. In this respect, Lyons (1977) provided an inclusive definition to context:

“a theoretical construct in the postulation of which the linguist abstracts from the actual situation and establishes as contextual all the factors which, by virtue of their influence
upon the participants in a language event, systematically determine the form, the appropriacy and the meaning of utterances” (p. 572).

In the same line of thought, the learning environment used in this study to refer to the physical, emotional, and cultural context in which learning takes place, the surrounding circumstances, and the atmosphere which affect learning. The setting either provides a healthy, comfortable, safe, and secure space for students or hinders effective performance.

**Social factors in EFL Learning**

Based on a significant body of literature, the social factors refer to those variables of social communities that have apparent effects on language acquisition, including the linguistic nature of the community, the political climate concerning bilingualism, the socio-economic status of the student, as well as the language-learning context.

To begin with, the linguistic nature of the community is one of the factors that are believed to affect learning a foreign language. It should not surprise that Morocco has always been known for its linguistic diversity; it is socially and linguistically diverse. This process of variety is made because of historical factors, including colonization and the effects of globalization. The Moroccan cultural and linguistic community is characterized by the successful usage of Arabic, Tamazight, Spanish, French, and English.

Importantly, Ennaji (2005) gives a history of the various factors behind multilingualism in Morocco. He sketches the complexity of the language situation before and after colonization and the factors that lead multilingual communities to show up, including migration, globalization, and colonialism. Furthermore, he intensively focused on the issues of Culture, Identity, and Language, stressing that the role of the mother tongue is significant for identity building. Moreover, he sheds light on the tension that exists between Tamazight and Arabic languages and cultures as well. In addition, as has been stressed earlier, the Moroccan policymakers have strongly promoted foreign languages in general and English and in particular. In this respect, the former minister of higher education in Morocco said in an interview with the Moroccan newspaper “AlYaoum” that English is the practical language for scientific research; hence, it is believed to be the solution of the educational system in the country. He claimed that the students who want to continue their study in the scientific stream, more specifically Engineering and Medicine, should acquire proficiency in English. Morocco has to adopt English as the primary foreign language in the educational system like many countries such as Spain, Portugal, and Romania. (Rohan, 2014).

Furthermore, It cannot be denied that the social and economic status of the students affects overall human functioning (abilities and outcomes). Morgan et al. (2009) claimed that low-class students develop academic skills slower than children from higher socio-economic status groups. In other words, high-class Moroccan students had the chance to have access and enroll in highly sophisticated private schools, meet native speakers in foreign countries, attend conferences and workshops, and so on. On the other hand, low socio-economic status students are less likely to have experiences that encourage the development of fundamental skills since they have fewer resources to draw on.
Similarly, context in which a foreign language is taught and learned, has an apparent effect on the language learning process. In 1972, Dell Hymes was the first who advocates the importance of context in learning a foreign language. He claimed the necessity of knowing what happens outside the classroom to explain students’ behaviors, performance, and achievement. He noted further that “the key to understanding language in context is to start not with language but with context … [and then to] systematically relate the two” (p.19). Smith and Braine (1974) also highlighted the role of the cultural context in affecting students’ second and foreign language learning.

Interestingly, the foreign language context in Morocco is formal; the English language is used mainly in the academic settings, business, and other formal contexts. This has a clear impact on students’ achievement.

Social theories and models of foreign language learning

It is worth noting that several researchers in second language acquisition have investigated many contextual and psychological factors that significantly affect second language acquisition and learning. These researchers in the field provided their own models to explain how those variables contribute or hinder the process of students’ foreign language achievement. The arguments provided differ considerably between those scholars. The most critical social theories and models that have been highlighted in the literature and deserve careful attention are Gardner’s model and Clement’s social context model.

Gardner’s Model (Social-Educational Model)

The leading and prominent figure in this model was Gardner. The social-educational model is considered as the recent model that applies to both foreign and second language learning contexts. Gardner (1985) attempted to combine Carroll and Lambert’s model, and therefore came up with his model called the social-psychological model. In this model, Gardner depicted the attitudes and motivation in learning a second language. In this regard, he stressed the role of four crucial elements that have tremendous and considerable effects on second language acquisition. These factors include:

- **Social Milieu**: by the social milieu, Gardner means the cultural environment that may significantly affect the cognitive and the affective aspects of the students.

- **Individual differences**: these differences have to do with four variables that interact with the context, and therefore influencing second language learning. Gardner’s model linked Anxiety, language aptitude, intelligence, and motivation to proficiency in a second language.

- **Learning acquisition context**: it is the setting in which language learning occurs, either formal or informal. Indeed, the degree of proficiency differs significantly from one context to another.

- **Outcomes**: knowledge and language skills (e.g., grammar & vocabulary) and non-linguistic skills (e.g., values and interest in the target language learning).

Succinctly stated, the four variables mentioned above directly affect second language learning. Gardner stressed that language aptitude and intelligence have significant influence
when learning occurs in formal contexts, while motivation role is substantial in informal contexts.

**Figure 1. Operational Formulation of the Socio-Educational Model**

**Clement’s Model (Social Context Model)**

Clement’s social context Model (1980) ensured the role of the cultural and the social environment on the communicative competence of the students, highlighting two different variables; integrativeness and fear of assimilation. By integrativeness, Clement meant holding a positive attitude towards the target language and culture, while the fear of assimilation has to do with the fear of losing one’s own culture or the first language (Clement & Kruidenier, 1985). This motivational process is called the primary motivational process. In addition, a second process was presented by Clement. It is called the secondary motivational process. This process plays a crucial role in the acquisition of learning a target language. It refers to the students’ self-confidence to use the target language (TL). Put it differently, the student has more chance to learn a target language and gains self-confidence if there is a pleasant contact. However, the failure will be the result of using the second language (L2) (Clement, 1980).

In short, the model introduced by Clement enhanced the idea that students’ success or failure to acquire the target language is determined by the students’ level of motivation. The latter is affected by the ethnolinguistic vitality of the second language (L2) and the level of confidence to use the L2. Therefore, Clement neglects the role of the school context and the classroom environment in learning the second language.

**Methodology**

To meet the study objectives, two main data collection methods were used: open-ended surveys and interviews.
Participants
A total of 79 students originally participated in the study. They were Moroccan first-year master (MA) students at the University of Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah in Fez (USMBA). They were enrolled in the first year in four different Master Programs, namely Cultural Studies, Language, Communication & Society, Translation, and Applied Language Studies & Research in Higher Education. This population was chosen because students, in the four master programs, came from different cities bringing their own cultures that make the classroom a multicultural context. They came from twenty-five different cities, which are: Fez, Tinghir, Aknoun, Bouizakarne, Elhoceima, Outat Elhaj, Ksar Elkbir, Arfoud, Tafraout, Meknes, Misour, Rissani, Oujda, Tiznit, Houaya, Boumlane, Berkane, Casablanca, Ifrane, Rabat, Taza, Sefrou, and Agadir. Students’ mother tongues vary widely between the four dominant languages (Moroccan Arabic, Tamazight, Tarifit, and Tachlhit (Tasousit). Furthermore, the great majority of the respondents, thirty-five out of seventy-nine, live in Fez. In addition, 76% of the respondents were aged between nineteen and twenty-four, 19% were aged between twenty-five and thirty, and 5% were aged over thirty. There were forty-four (56%) male participants, thirty-five (44%) female participants.

Research approach
Both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches were used in this study. The quantitative approach helped determine the profiles of the EFL students whose proficiency is affected by the environmental variables, in measuring the extent to which their proficiency is affected, and in finding out the different factors behind and impacts of the environmental influence. On the other hand, the qualitative approach was helped elicit more in-depth explanations about why and how some EFL students’ proficiency is influenced by the teaching/learning environment (either formal or informal). Mixing both approaches increased the validity and the reliability of the data and, thus, the quality of the findings.

Data collection procedures:
The first and main data collection procedure that was used to gather quantitative data is the questionnaire. It consisted of two parts related to the participants’ background information and factors affecting EFL students’ academic achievement. One of the strengths of using a questionnaire in this study was to elicit quantitative data related to the profiles of EFL students whose proficiency was affected by the environmental variables, and the reasons behind and impacts of the environmental influence on their proficiency. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were also used to collect data. This qualitative data collection procedure allowed respondents the time and scope to talk about their opinions on the subject. It allowed the researcher to elicit in-depth information around the topic.

Results
Social community factors affecting EFL students’ academic achievements
In item six in the questionnaire, the participants were asked about the social community factors affecting the EFL students’ academic achievements. They were given seven statements and asked to indicate whether they have positive, negative, or no effects on EFL students’ academic achievements. They were also asked to add any other factor not mentioned in the list under the section other. The obtained results are summarized in Table 1 below.
From the results presented, it can be seen that item one, “Linguistic Nature of the Community (Multilingualism),” is believed to affect the EFL students’ academic achievements positively. Sixty-two out of seventy-two respondents stressed that the presence of different local and foreign languages in Morocco leaves room for diversity and creates a good learning atmosphere that promotes students’ learning outcomes and, therefore, their academic achievements. To substantiate this, interviewee one stressed that: “being in a multilingual society helps you become a bilingual, acquiring new skills, improving multitasking abilities, being more logical and rational, having better decision-making skills and being more perceptive and aware of your surroundings.” Moreover, multilingualism may not affect the outcomes of the students. This view is held by twenty respondents. In this respect, an interviewee claimed that: “It (multilingualism) has nothing to do with the progress of students; all that matters is one’s motivation and self-esteem as well some external factors.” While only five respondents argued that Moroccan linguistic diversity has negative effects on students’ academic achievements.

The study also reveals that the students who belong to a high socio-economic status get the chance to benefit from various facilities and thus affect their academic achievements positively while students low socioeconomic status students are less likely to have experiences that encourage the development of fundamental skills since they have fewer resources to draw on. Likewise, the figure above shows, in items two and three respectively, that the great majority of the respondents, fifty-nine out of seventy-nine, argued that the high socio-economic status of the students affects their outcomes of the students in a positive way. As such, fifty-eight out of seventy-nine pinpointed that the low socio-economic status of the students hinders the success of the EFL students. Similarly, one interviewee sign pointed that: “high-class students have the chance to have access to libraries, buy books, meet native speakers in foreign countries, attend conferences and workshops, and so on.” This argument finds real evidence in Morgan et al. (2009), who claimed that low class-students develop academic skills slower than children from higher socio-economic status groups.

Interestingly, the great majority of respondents, fifty-five out of seventy-nine, argued that holding various beliefs, norms and values affects their achievement significantly. That is, being unfamiliar with others’ cultures leads to culture shock. To give a further explanation to this point, one of the interviewees stated: “Yes, we came from different regions, and each one brings his/her cultural norms into the classroom. So, this hampers creating a safe learning environment in which all students express their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs freely.” Here, we infer that learning about students’ cultures beforehand helps minimize cultural misunderstanding and, therefore, culture shock. Moreover, twelve participants stressed the importance of culture shock in making students aware of the different cultures and ways to avoid the puzzling moments within the classroom context. As such, eleven claimed that culture shock does not affect their achievements. They do not identify culture shock as a component in the difficulties and variables that may affect students’ academic achievements.

Importantly, when asked whether the English language learning context affects their achievements or not, forty-nine students firmly believe that learning English in a formal context boosts their personal and academic achievements. The formal context provides students with the basic and crucial skills to adapt themselves quickly to any situation. In addition, eighteen respondents hold the idea that learning English merely in a formal context is affecting EFL
students’ learning and achievements negatively. The English language is used mainly in academic institutions, business, and other formal environments. This, in fact, has a clear impact on students’ achievement. One reason that would account for this is the following as an Interviewee signposted: “Yeah, the time allotted to English classes at the university is not enough. We need to practice the foreign language much more in the informal context. In other words, English should not be used only in the classroom environment to give the students the opportunity to have exposure to the authentic context to enhance their linguistic and communicative competencies.” In addition, another interviewee said: “Yes, it somehow affects it negatively. Having the classroom as the only environment where I can use English can deteriorate the level of my spoken English. Therefore, the usage of the language shouldn't be limited to the classroom only.” Added to this, eleven participants mentioned that there is no relationship, either positive or negative, between the English language-learning context and the performance of students. This view is confirmed by Clement (1980), who neglects the role of the school context and the classroom environment in learning the second language.

In addition, fear of the loss of one’s own culture or L1 is chosen by thirty-six of the respondents as an environmental variable believed to affect students’ academic achievements negatively. It is worth noting that maintaining one’s own culture and neglecting the target lifestyles and cultural norms affects the outcome of the students in a variety of ways. Thirty-four of the respondents claimed that students’ reluctance or even conservatism has no effect on their personal performance and proficiency. In this regard, one interviewee stated that: “I don't have a clear justification. I just don't think that students would fear to lose their L 1 since they keep using it at home and with friends.” Only eight respondents mentioned the positive side of preserving one’s own culture in the sense that it helps students to choose what suits and does not contradict their norms, traditions, and their beliefs.

Table 1. The effect of Social community factors on EFL students’ academic achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Nature of the Community (Multilingualism)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO EFFECTS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Socioeconomic Status of the Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO EFFECTS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Socioeconomic Status of the Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO EFFECTS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture Shock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO EFFECTS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Learning Context</td>
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</tr>
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<td>MISSING</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceptions of learning English in a multicultural context

The participants were then given six statements and asked to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement to elicit their perceptions of learning English in a multicultural context. The obtained results are summarized in the table below.

Table 2. Students’ Perceptions of learning English in a multicultural context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The more similarity exists between the students’ cultures, the more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>successful the learning is.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring English language proficiency necessitates the adoption of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural and linguistic aspects of English people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students try to achieve a sense of identification and independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from others, based on some dimensions or values such as language,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>norms, traditions…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ academic achievement has nothing to do with the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ academic achievement is affected by socio-cultural aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and variables.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning about students’ cultures beforehand helps achieve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the results presented above, it is clear that item one, “The more similarity exists between the students’ cultures, the more successful the learning is”, got a high score. Fifty-six out of seventy-nine of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement in this item, while only a minority of them (nine participants) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. This may indicate that the differences in cultures indeed affect the process of learning and teaching. Certainly, negative attitudes and emotions are present due to unexpected cultural differences in the intra-cultural experiences and multicultural environment. Importantly, when learning a foreign language, EFL students tend to treat the new language in the lenses of their language. In this respect, an interviewee stated: “as you said, the cultural background is very important in the sense that students who belong to the same background stick with each other, collaborate and help each other significantly more than they do with others belonging to other cultures.”

In addition, the results in the table above show that the vast majority of the participants, forty-nine out of seventy-nine, were in favor of the statement in item two, “Acquiring English language proficiency necessitates the adoption of cultural and linguistic aspects of English people.” While only nineteen disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, and the other eleven participants chose neutral. This demonstrates that language is the keystone of culture. That is, without language, culture would not be available. As such, language is widely influenced and shaped by culture (it reflects culture). Thus, culture is considered a crucial part of language teaching. Interestingly, the goal of learning a foreign language cannot be separated from its cultural context. In this line of thought, the linguist Lado (1964) stated that the goal of foreign language learning is:

“The ability to use it, understanding its meanings and connotations in terms of the target language and culture, and the ability to understand the speech and writing of natives of the target culture in terms of their great ideas and achievement” (p. 25).

Therefore, teaching English as a foreign language inevitably involves the cultural teaching of that language.

The participants were also asked to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement in item three “Students try to achieve a sense of identification and independence from others, based on some dimensions or values such as language, norms, traditions, and so on.” The results show that the great majority (fifty-four of the respondents), either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement; only four students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with it, while twenty-one chose neutral. This demonstrates that the difference in cultural backgrounds pushes students to achieve a sense of identification and independence from other students who belong to different cultures. This may be because students find it challenging to accept other behaviors and norms, and preserve their own cultural norms and values, especially when there is no pleasant contact.

The results in table two also show that the vast majority of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed with item five, “Students’ academic achievement has nothing to do with the learning environment.” Fifty-four are strongly agreed and agreed with the statement in item six, “Students’ academic achievement is affected by socio-cultural aspects and variables.” This
implies that societal, home/family, and school/classroom variables play a vital role in determining the degree of EFL students’ academic achievements.

Unsurprisingly, fifty-five out of seventy-nine respondents either strongly agree or agree with the statement in item seven, “learning about students’ cultures beforehand helps to achieve proficiency.” This again can be explained by the fact that holding various beliefs, norms and values, and being unaware of the rules of social behaviors can affect the social relations of students as well as their academic achievements. Thus, it is of utmost importance to prepare as much beforehand as possible. That is to say, learning about other students’ cultures and developing awareness of cultural background knowledge to be familiar with the new culture helps to achieve proficiency and creates a safe environment to overcome cultural obstacles. This familiarity with the new environment and its culture allows people to imagine the possible challenges they may face during their encounters to become more prepared.

Discussion
It is worth pointing out that the results obtained paint an image about the factors that can potentially contribute to the success and failure in learning and acquiring a foreign language. It is thus interesting to note that some of the results we get are not related to the findings in the literature. For example, Clement (1980) claimed, in his social context model, that students’ success or failure to acquire the target language is determined by the students’ level of motivation, which is affected by ethno-linguistic vitality of L2 and the level of confidence to use L2. Therefore, Clement neglects the role of the school/classroom environment in learning the second language. This argument was not found to apply to the context under our investigation. Instead, the vast majority of the respondents argued that not only motivation, but also the environmental variables affect their achievements significantly. On the other hand, several of the findings of this research corroborate the findings of some previous studies. In this vein, Schumann (1976) stressed that language is the factor in successfully acculturating. The acculturation model assumes that the more similarity exists between the two cultures, the more successful the learning is. Similarly, our data indicate the same idea and ensure that belonging to different cultures, holding various norms, traditions, and values has profound effects on students’ academic achievements.

Moreover, in line with the research findings by Ferraro (1990), who pinpointed that the familiarity with the new environment and its culture allows students to imagine the possible challenges they may face during their encounters to become more prepared. This argument was also proved through our data. That is, learning about others’ cultures beforehand to be familiar with the new cultures helps minimize culture shock and psychological disorientation and therefore allows students to achieve proficiency in foreign languages.

It is noteworthy that the faculty of letters and human sciences Dhar Elmahraz-Fez, more specifically the MA Programs received students from different cities and thus of diverse cultural backgrounds. In this regard, students of the four masters came from 25 different cities bringing their own cultures. This makes the classroom a multicultural context. Given this, this cultural diversity in which students come from diverse ethnic, linguistic and even racial backgrounds have either positive or negative effects on their academic achievements. Put it differently, they have different perspectives, insights; knowledge to the learning may be either beneficial or
The impact of learning environment on EFL students’ challenging. It enhances students’ achievements through improving several skills, problem-solving, open minds, and increasing intercultural awareness through acquiring the ability to learn, and collaborate with students of diverse cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, the variation in traditions, norms, and beliefs pose significant learning limitations in this multicultural environment.

It is worth mentioning that socio-contextual factors, precisely societal, home/family, and school/classroom variables, in a way or another, significantly affect the whole paradigmatic and the pedagogic structure. The vast majority of the respondents emphasized the role of these variables in hindering the process of EFL learning. The fact that students come from different cultural backgrounds, hold various beliefs, norms, and values, are unaware of the rules of social behaviors, and learning a foreign language in another environment, is considered as a challenging task and the most influential variable that affects students’ achievements. Therefore, intercultural adjustment and awareness help people understand the target culture and adapt to the new environment. This makes it a necessity to call for cross-cultural training that helps students understand their values as well as those of other sub-cultures EFL students in a multicultural context.

Pedagogical recommendations

Based on the obtained results, several implications can be brought up for possible effective change in the future. That is to enhance the learning environment atmosphere to boost the academic achievements of the EFL students and therefore achieve better results. In addition, for the higher education institutions to take steps towards more effective implementation, an intracultural communication course that includes several disciplines, should be demanded for EFL students. That helps students of different cultural backgrounds exchange information between them, interpreting the behaviors of other students in a more objective way and not heavily laden with emotion and values. It also gives a chance to all the students to learn about their peers’ cultures beforehand to minimize the cultural misunderstanding and, therefore, the culture shock. Moreover, the university infrastructure should not be neglected when it comes to the external factors that profoundly affect students’ achievements. The higher the infrastructure is, the more positive the impact on the students is. Last but not least, teachers have to be optimistic about diversity in the classroom; knowing the students as individuals as well as growing in cultural awareness is considered as the critical element of using students' diverse cultural backgrounds to enhance their academic achievement.

Conclusions

In the light of the study results and the ensuing discussion, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the linguistic nature of the community (Multilingualism) is believed to affect the EFL students’ academic achievements positively. That is because different local and foreign languages in Morocco leave room for diversity and create a good learning atmosphere that promotes students’ learning outcomes and, therefore their academic achievements. Moreover, holding various beliefs, norms, and values affects students’ achievement in a significant way. The confusion about the norms of behavior in a new cultural setting hinders achieving better outcomes. As such, the fear of the loss of one’s own culture or L1 is believed to affect students’ academic achievements negatively. Furthermore, the more similarity exists between the students’ cultures, the more successful the learning is. Finally, yet importantly, Cultural backgrounds push
students to achieve a sense of independence from other students belonging to different cultures. Students find it challenging to accept other behaviors and norms as well as preserve their cultural norms and values, especially when there is no pleasant contact. The study also revealed that low-class students develop academic skills slower than children from higher socio-economic status groups. In other words, the academic performance of students has been attributed to many factors that are mainly family-based (the high socio-economic status of the students have positive correlations with the student’s quality of achievement and is negatively correlated with the low socio-economic level of their family).

Overall, it is worth noting, then, that the findings of this study showed that the development of EFL proficiency is a product of contextual factors influence. Several factors mentioned above were shown to correlate significantly with the EFL students’ academic achievement at MA Program.

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References
Developing English Pronunciation through Animation and YouTube Videos

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Received: 8/3/2021 Accepted: 11/14/2021 Published:12/15/2021

Abstract
Using multimedia inside the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom has been anticipated by several researchers and educators recently as a new necessary component of language learning. This is ascribed on the one hand to the continuous advancements in the new technological devices that might be used in presenting the various types of multimedia inside the classroom, and, on the other hand, to the fact that learners have started to acquire new modes of cognitive learning preferences due to their excessive daily use of these devices. This study investigates the appropriateness and practicality of using some animated or dynamic graphs and YouTube movies in teaching the pronunciation of English to Iraqi-Arabic learners of English as a foreign language. The two groups of the subjects who participated in this case study were taught using two different methods of teaching with and without using multimedia. Unlike those who were part of the control group, subjects belonging to the experimental group performed much better in their posttest results (62.31% of the experimental group average percentage and 47.09% of the control group average percentage).

Keywords: Animation, EFL teaching, English pronunciation, multimedia, YouTube videos

Cite as: Juma, M. J. (2021). Developing English Pronunciation through Animation and YouTube Videos. Arab World English Journal, 12 (4) 142-152.
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.26
Introduction

Although there has been a considerable timespan since the communicative approach to English language teaching was first proposed, both teachers and students in many non-native English-language speaking countries, including Iraq, are still not able to adapt it as a teaching style due to several educational and technical reasons such as the unavailability of native English teachers and the lack of classrooms with the required equipment. As it is universally known, the main elements of this approach are exposing the foreign learners to as many authentic materials as possible and using them interactively inside and outside the language classroom. The learning strategies used by the students in these countries in learning English language are similar to those used in learning any other subject matter as their main aim is to pass the exams. Accordingly, generally speaking, the students find the whole process of learning as monotonous and unfruitful.

Due to the continuous advancements in the new technology, the last three decades have witnessed a new generation of learners in general and EFL learners in particular. The hallmark of this generation is the skilful use of interactive computer-mediated technologies such as smartphones, laptops, and iPads to create and share their interests and ideas in highly-complex virtual communities and networks. This global social phenomenon has created new modes of thinking and learning and recalled the communicative approach to be an integrated part of any EFL classroom.

Prensky (2001) calls this generation the “digital immigrants”; a term which was basically introduced in 1996 after the declaration of the independence of cyberspace (Zaphiris & Ioannou 2018). People who belong to this generation all around the world share several characteristics. Apart from the professional use of various types of new technological devices and their countless applications, they have changed to be more like active learners and interactive users, though virtually, in collecting information and distributing news on the Internet. As for learners of English as a foreign language, Benson (2015) thinks that these new technological devices lead to a new era of “intercultural interaction” which would naturally require us to think of new techniques and procedures in English teaching.

Such remarkable development of the technological devices and the new modes of learning have encouraged teachers and educators to think about how to make use of them in the academic setting. For instance, some scholars investigated what they call game-based learning talking about the cognitive advantages of playing games Van Eck (2006). Gee (2005) assumes that the game player is also a learner and a “co-designer” who learns how to make decisions and solve problems and construct an imagination. On the other hand, several scholars investigated the use of multimedia inside the EFL classroom. Yudintseva (2015) surveyed seventeen published studies that examined whether computer games and videos might help in developing the learning strategies concluding that “interactions with native speakers in anonymous informal gaming environment reduced anxiety and increased exposure to slang and colloquial language” (p.107).

Literature Review

Animation inside EFL Classroom

Multimedia is usually understood as an amalgamation of texts, sounds, pictures, animation and videos which are used interactively to entertain. The term was first used in art by Bob Goldstein; a British singer and artist as a means to develop his performance (Badii et. al.: 2009). Mayer and Moreno (2002) have defined multimedia in terms of the two channels through which the user...
perceives it (visual and auditory), the modes used to transfer it (pictorial and verbal), and the
device used in multimedia presentation (computers, laptops, iPads, etc.). As one technique of
multimedia demonstration, animation is usually understood as the process of manipulating
pictures in a moving presentation. It started by hand painting pictures which then photographed
and transformed into movies. As a result of the development of technological devices that might
be used in this reference, we now have sophisticated computer animation and 3D animation.
Animation, which is one of the most important forms of multimedia these days, has been
identified with three main features: they are represented by pictures (whether hand painted or
computerized), they are not real pictures, and non-static (Mayer & Moreno: 2002)

Despite the fact that the various forms of multimedia including animation were basically
used for entertainment, the fascinating development in the technological devices used and its
widespread among the new generation have stimulated teachers and educators to use a
comparative technique inside the classroom.

In order to differentiate between animation in its entertaining and teaching dimensions,
Lowe (2004) proposes four different roles that might be assigned to it. The first one is called
“affective” which carries the enjoyable function that motivates the receivers’ sensations, whereas
the “cognitive” role is associated with comprehending a specific message implied in the subject
matter, the third one is an “enabling” role which might be used by learners who have some
difficulty in understanding the subject matter, and the fourth one is a “facilitative” one which is
used when learners have already acquired the required information and need more explanation
and illustration. Even though the first function of animation suggested by Lowe represents its
unmarked characteristic as it was basically invented to entertain, investigating the nature of the
other three functions is naturally our main concern in this paper.

Talking about the cognitive function of animation requires us to think of animated
graphics rather than pictures as the term is usually used with the implicature of informing and
illustrating more than entertaining. Tversky, Morrison, & Betrancourt (2002) try to answer the
question if graphics (whether static like maps and building plans or dynamic ones like cartoon
movies) “can facilitate comprehension, learning, memory, communication and inference”. They
found that although the animated graphics carry more sophisticated system of information in
comparison to static ones, they are less comprehensible because of this exact feature. Yet, other
scholars such as (Caraballo, 1985, Rieber, 1996 & Wong, 1994) assert that dynamic or
“animated visualization is more likely than static visuals to present effectively movement
inprecpetible to the human eye”

Mayer (2005) proposes a theory of multimedia learning after 15 years of collaborative
work at University of California that might help to explore the nature of the “instructional
messages” within multimedia and how they are transformed and perceived. The theory is based
on five “cognitive processes”: “Selecting relevant words from the text or narration, selecting
relevant images from the illustration, organizing the selected words into a coherent verbal
representation, organizing the selected images, and integrating the pictorial and verbal
representations and prior knowledge”. The theory, moreover, is based on three different
assumptions: The first is the “dual-channel assumption” based on the fact that the learners
perceive information via ears or eyes depending on the nature of information (e.g. words and
narration vs. animations and videos), the second is the “limited-capacity” of learners in “storing
the amount of information in each channel”, and the third is the “active-processing” of
information which is concerned with “integrating the new with prior knowledge” (Mayer, 2005, pp. 31-58).

As it is obvious, the theory talks about general learning via all types of multimedia differentiating between static and dynamic graphics on one hand, and the implied nature of the information (i.e. verbal or visual) in whatever multimedia type is used. Two questions are to be raised in this reference. First, how does the theory work in language processing? And second, does the theory work in learning English as a foreign language in a comparative way? In order to answer these two questions, a modified version of the theory might be presented to be more applicable to learning English as a foreign language (see Figure 1).

The major difference is the obstacles that exist in the long-term memory concerning the first language phonological, syntactic, and semantic structures which stop the integration between the prior knowledge and new knowledge and confuse the organization of words and images in the working memory. To illustrate, if an Arab learner of English as a foreign language hears and watch the word “strawberry” through a dynamic graph, he would process its pronunciation and meaning by using his auditory and visual channel and store it in his working memory. Yet, when connecting it to his prior knowledge in the long-term memory which in this case reads there is no consonant clusters in Arabic, there will be a confusion in the working memory as the pronunciation of the word would be stored as /sɔtrəbi/ instead of /strɔbəri/.

Such confusion would most likely disorganize the sounds and probably also the images if we put in mind the homophonous words.

**Figure 1. The Multimedia Learning of a Foreign Language Based on Mayer (2005, pp. 31-58)**

**YouTube Videos inside EFL Classroom**

In addition to animation, the web.2 generation has shown a great interest in using the YouTube movies. Benson (2015) believes that the gradual universal spreading of technological devices like smartphones, laptops, iPads, etc., helped the new generation to have their own say in using the social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube lead to a new era of intercultural interaction. According, as they do with animation, teachers and educators particularly in EFL setting all around the world started to study how to make use of this universal phenomena inside the classroom.
One of the most important advantages of using YouTube movies as an educational tool inside the EFL classroom is to provide learners with the chance to listen to authentic material. Felix (2002) and O’Dowd (2000), Bastos & Ramos (2009) assume that “the use of authentic learning materials that engage second language learners to communicate in real contexts and foster the development of comprehension and communication (oral and writing) skills and intercultural communication competences, plays a crucial role in foreign language learning”. Stempleski (1995), states that “English teachers all over the world cry out for materials which can make English come alive for their students. TV, video, and the newer-video related technologies provides just such a resource”. Other scholars such as (Çakir, 2006) connect between the need to revive the communicative approach to English language learning and this need to use authentic material inside the EFL classroom.

Apart from the exposure to authentic materials as a main advantage of using YouTube videos inside the EFL classroom, other scholars discuss some other ideas. Arthur (1999) talks about developing the audio/visual perceptions of learners and increasing the awareness of the FL culture, and providing teachers with different alternatives to control the learners’ anxiety. Berk (2009), moreover, adds some other advantages related to motivating learners by attracting their attention, increasing their comprehension and memorization, and providing them with a great opportunity to express themselves spontaneously. Moreover, Harmer (2001) found two logics behind incorporating videos with the learning process. First, enhancing the learner’s comprehension as the visual clues implied would help to transform both meanings and moods. Second, raising the cultural awareness of learners by making an association with the real contexts outside the classroom.

Despite these advantages some scholars such as (Olson & Clough: 2001) talk about a “caution not”. When using YouTube movies inside the classroom as they might overburden the learners with the overwhelming information that exceeds their conceptual comprehension. In the same reference, Rachelle & Heller (1990) discuss the problem of information abundance in cyberspace that might confuse learners and prevent them from arriving at the main content of the intended message. Hoogeveen (1997), moreover, denies the existence of clear evidence for the practicality of using multimedia in learning as it leads to “negative cognitive side effects” such as overstimulation, cognitive overload, and fatigue.

Regardless of such warning notes about using YouTube movies inside EFL classroom, when the web. 02 generation will have the lead as teachers and educators in the near future, it is universally expected that nothing would prevent them from using all types of technological devices inside the classroom as they would be part of their learning life.

Teaching English Pronunciation to Foreign Learners: How to Overcome the Negative Effect of L1 Sound System?

Courses designed to teach English pronunciation at the under-graduate level usually include the following four topics:

- short introduction to the difference between phonetics and phonology,
- detailed account to the articulators or organs of speech as the main topic of “articulatory phonetics”
- detailed account to the English consonants, vowels, and diphthongs,
Developing English Pronunciation through Animation and YouTube Videos

Juma

There are various challenges concerning learning the correct pronunciation of English by foreign language learners. One of the most prominent challenges is how to overcome the effect of the first language. Advanced foreign learners of English might succeed in acquiring a native-like competence in all aspects of the language skills but keeping the accent and some phonological habits of their mother tongue. Ellis (1994) states that “the existence of foreign accent in L2 learning is so well attested that it hardly requires documenting. In general, native speakers have little difficulty in distinguishing the language background of different learners”. To illustrate, he cites Purcell and Suter (1980) who asked native speakers of English to judge the “pronunciation accuracy” of foreign learners of English with four different L1 (Thai, Japanese, Arabic, and Persian) and found that although the pronunciation inaccuracy was clear in all the subjects, the Thai and Japanese learners were less accurate due to the language distance with English.

Back to Lado’s contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH) appeared in his book “Linguistics Across Cultures” (1957), one may find the best interpretation to the difficulty that foreign language learners find in learning the pronunciation of English. In the introduction, he states that:

the student who comes into contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult (P. 20).

Despite the fact that the CAH was subject to different types of criticism, it has proved to be very efficient in any foreign language classroom as it helps teachers to concentrate on the L1/L2 differences and accordingly design the appropriate syllable for their students.

To shed some light on the difficulty that an Arab learner finds in learning the English vowels and diphthongs, for instance, in the light of CAH, one may recall that there are 27 vowels (short, long, diphthongs and triphthongs) in English, whereas in Arabic there are only three vowels \( \text{أ/و/ي} \) (whose function in the Arabic writing system as letters is far more prominent than their function in the sound system even for the Arabic native speakers. Consequently, we may expect that Arab learners would find a great deal of difficulty in learning the English vowels and diphthongs.

In order to mitigate the difficulty of learning the English pronunciation to a certain degree, phoneticians realized, long time ago, the importance of using the language labs making use of
the available technological devices. Since the time of Daniel Jones (1881-1967) who was of the founders of the International Phonetic Association (IPA), scholars working in phonetics have been in a continuous pursuit of appropriate tools to help learners starting from cassette tape recorders in the 1960s and ending up the dynamic graphs, software, applications, and YouTube videos. To illustrate, a group of students at the University of Iowa developed computer software which later on became a smartphone application in App Store and Google Play in which they “provide a comprehensive understanding of how each of the speech sounds of American English, Spanish, and German are formed. It includes animations, videos, and audio samples that describe the essential features of each of the consonants and vowels of these languages”.

Moreover, the IPA interactive chart has been developed by individual phoneticians, departments of linguistics and phonetics at different American and British universities, and different academic institutions such as the British Council making good use of the new technology. For instance, Paul Meier and Eric Armstrong developed a neat detailed demonstration to the IPA interactive chart with both American and British pronunciation and made it available at Tunes app and Android app.

In addition to these applications which have been used by thousands of foreign English learners in all around the world, there are enormous YouTube videos which are made available by several native English teachers that have been found very useful in providing an authentic English pronunciation to foreign learners.

**Methods**
The study aims to answer the following question:
- Does using animation and YouTube videos inside the EFL classroom in teaching English pronunciation to make any difference in comparison to the traditional method of teaching?

The subjects of the study were 44 second-year female students at the English department/College of Education for Women/ Al-Iraqia University who share the same age with equivalent educational backgrounds despite some minor individual discrepancies.

Participants
This study was implemented in the College of Education for Women at Al- Iraqia University in 2018-2019. The 44 students who participated in the study had a three-month course in which they studied articulatory phonetics (the functions of speech organs), the characteristics of consonants in terms of manner and place of articulation and voicing, the characteristics of vowels in terms of the vertical and horizontal movements of the tongue. They also studied the transcriptions of the English vowels and consonants with few examples for the sake of practice. In teaching how the consonants and vowels are pronounced, teachers usually read the examples aloud in the classroom after writing their transcriptions on the board asking some students to repeat over and over. After the course, the 44 students were subject to a pretest to assess their overall comprehension of the course. Then, they were divided into two groups; the control group (22 students) was provided with a three-hour lecture in which the teacher revised the pronunciation of the English vowels and diphthongs following the same traditional method based on imitation, memorization, and repetition using the textbook and the board. The experimental group was given a three-hour lecture in which another teacher revised the pronunciation of the English vowels and diphthongs using the interactive lab instead of the classroom. The experimental group revised the lecture with the help of the two applications and YouTube videos mentioned above. After the lecture the 44 students were admitted to a posttest.

**Discussing the Results**

The pretest results of the study (see the details in the Appendix A) of both the control and experimental groups were almost the same (the average percentage of the total scores was 54.2% for the experimental group and 54.27% for the control group). These results helped to give a more accurate answer to the main question of the study. On the other hand, the average percentage of total scores of the posttest results of the experimental group was (62.31%) which was much better than that of the control group (47.09) which indicate clearly the efficiency of using animation and YouTube videos. Figures (5 and 6) illustrate a comparison between the pretest and posttest results for each one of the 44 students in both groups. The rising and falling results when comparing the pretest and posttest in both groups as illustrated in Figures (7 and 8) support the same assumption. It should be mentioned here that to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there is no clear reason that explains the falling drop in the control group’s results comparing with their own results in the pretest other than the timespan between finishing the three months course and doing the test (about a month).

Moreover, in order to have a more obvious idea about the results of the two groups in the posttest, a comparison made between the results related to answering the questions about vowels in comparison to diphthongs. Such comparison was made to see if there is a difficulty that the subjects might have in comprehending the pronunciation of particular groups of English vowels. As for the experimental group (Figures 9 and 10), the average percentage related to answering questions about vowels was (62.27%), and (46.81%) for the control group.

As for answering the questions related to diphthongs (Figures 11 and 12), the percentage of the experimental group was (63.18%) and that of the control group was (46.81%). These numbers support the main conclusion mentioned above about the superiority of the experimental group’s performance.
Finally, there is no significance difference between the average percentage related to both vowels and diphthongs in the experimental group (62.27% and 63.18%) consecutively.

Figure 5. Experimental Group Pretest and Protest Results

Figure 6. Control Group Pretest and Protest Results

Figure 7. Percentages Comparison between Pretest and Posttest for the Control Group

Figure 8. Percentages Comparison between Pretest and Posttest for the Experimental Group
Figure 9. Vowels Results in Experimental and Control Groups

Figure 9. Vowels Percentages in Experimental and Control Groups

Figure 11. Diphthongs Results in Experimental and Control Groups
Teaching English pronunciation to FL learners has always been a challenge to non-native English teachers. In the last few years, the researcher has occasionally witnessed the presence of Iraqi students whose English pronunciation (mostly American accent) is sometimes more accurate than their teachers. This might be ascribed to the fact that the new generation of students has been linked, in one way or another to the Web.2.0 users, whereas their teachers, generally speaking, are outside this domain. As the Web.2.0 Iraqi young people use the same technological devices and applications used in the entire world to have a direct access to the same social media cites, they have developed their own English pronunciation before they join their regular study. The new experience of on-line university teaching and learning that we are witnessing these days due to Coronavirus spread has proved the importance of thinking of making a good use of the available technological devices and applications.

Yet, those teachers planning to make use of these devices and applications inside the classroom in both face-to-face and virtual interactions should take into their considerations the possible negative side effects such as overstimulation, cognitive overload, and fatigue.

**About the Author:**
**Asst. Prof. Muayyed J. Juma.** I had my bachelor, Master, and Ph.D. degrees from Baghdad University in English language and linguistics and worked as an English teacher in different universities in Iraq, Jordan, and Oman for almost 20 years. I am working now in Al Mamoun University College in Baghdad.

**References**


## Appendices

### Appendix A

### The Results of the Study

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Appendix 2: The Posttest Questions

Circle the correct answer among the following alternatives:

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1. The vowel [iː] appears in the following word:
   A. retch   B. beat   C. bad   D. wet
2. The vowel [i] appears in the following word:
   A. led   B. bead   C. reach   D. bid
3. The vowel [e] appears in the following word:
   A. rich   B. bat   C. tan   D. bed
4. The vowel [æ] appears in the following word:
   A. pun   B. mesh   C. dad   D. dud
5. The vowels [Λ] appears in the following word:
   A. ton   B. dead   C. mash   D. bat
6. The long vowel [ɑː] appears in the following word:
   A. lust   B. barks   C. cop   D. duck
7. The vowel [o] appears in the following word:
   A. luck   B. carp   C. cop   D. barks
8. The vowel [ə] appears in the following word:
   A. know   B. Now   C. attend   D. loud
9. The long vowel [ʒː] appears in the following word:
   A. pull   B. pool   C. heard   D. pilot
10. The long vowel [ɔː] appears in the following word:
    A. shod   B. Paul   C. look   D. would
11. The diphthong [əu ] appears in the following word:
    A. low   B. law   C. saw   D. bought
12. The diphthong [au] appears in the following word:
    A. coal   B. call   C. loud   D. know
13. The diphthong [ei] appears in the following word:
    A. let   B. wait   C. rise   D. late
14. The diphthong [ai] appears in the following word:
    A. pepper   B. rice   C. fail   D. sail
15. The diphthong [ai] appears in the following word:
    A. close   B. annoy   C. tourist   D. file
16. The diphthong [ıə] appears in the following word:
    A. clear   B. noise   C. call   D. lake
17. The diphthong [ıʊ] appears in the following word:
    A. sure   B. more   C. tower   D. flower
18. The vowel sequence (triphthong) [aɪə] appears in the following word:
    A. Tower   B. flower   C. tired   D. coward
19. The vowel sequence (triphthong) [aʊə] appears in the following word:
    A. powerful   B. purely   C. riot   D. tire
20. The vowel sequence (triphthong) [eɪə] appears in the following word:
    A. bower   B. royal   C. flyer   D. ours
Improving Classroom Observation through Training: A Qualitative Study in College of Technology in Oman

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Received: 9/6/2021 Accepted: 11/18/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
Historically, classroom observations have been conducted in educational establishments for different purposes such as evaluation of teachers, promotion, curriculum design, or professional development. In this study, the researchers aimed to improve the effectiveness of the classroom observation process in an English Language Center based in a College of Technology in the Sultanate of Oman. The study adopted a qualitative research methodology and semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool. In the first stage, observers and teachers were interviewed to understand the existing classroom observation process. Based on the initial data, a training program was developed with materials from international good practice projects. Finally, the changes were identified through the second set of interviews with the participants. The major results of this study suggest that the training program contributed positively to the perceived effectiveness of the classroom observation process, reduced anxiety related to this process, and led to more balanced participation from both the observers and the teachers. Moreover, the implementation of the pre-observation conferences started taking place and post-observation meetings included more constructive feedback. This study adds to the literature on the importance of classroom observation training with a practical training program. This practical approach can be adopted in similar contexts with some adaptation to meet the specific needs of educational institutions. The researchers suggest a qualitative research approach to accompany any such future training to measure the effects of the training program.

Keywords: classroom observation, college of technology in Oman, non-directive approach, pre-observation conference, training program

Cite as: AL-Balushi, H. M. A., & Mat Saad, N.S. (2021). Improving Classroom Observation through Training: A qualitative Study in College of Technology in Oman. Arab World English Journal, 12 (4) 415-425. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.27
1. Introduction

Classroom observation can play an essential role in improving teachers' performance. Many researchers in the field of education mentioned that classroom observation is a tool for professional development, although this mainly depends on the way observations are carried out. In fact, classroom observation can also be a real concern and a cause of failure for many teachers if it is not applied effectively. A high level of anxiety negatively affects teachers' performance and extends its impact on the learning process in general. Therefore, it is important to make sure that those who perform the classroom observation are competent and able to perform this task professionally without causing negative feelings such as anxiety or fear.

1.1 History of Class Observation

The classroom observation process has gone through many different stages and variables (Olivia et al., 1997). The term inspection was used for the period from 1830 to 1850. This phase was characterized as a police phase where the purpose of the classroom observation process was to discover deficiencies and teachers' mistakes and determine whether teachers were applying the rules. The responsibility for carrying out this task rested with a committee made up of fathers, clergy and citizens. As for the next stage, it extended from 1850 to 1910 and adopted another term called Instructional improvement. In this period, the focus was on teachers and enhancing their ability to teach. However, from 1910 to 1930, classroom observation was called scientific and bureaucratic. The focus during this period was on improving the performance of teachers and enabling them to perform their work in the best way. The responsibility for carrying out the supervision task at this stage was assigned to each supervisor from the central office and the school principal. For the period from 1930 - 1950, the purpose of the observation process was mainly to improve the quality of teaching. This stage adopted the term human relations. However, from 1950-1970, monitoring became bureaucratic, scientific, clinical and humanistic relationships. A supervisor from the central office and the principal of the school were assigned to carry out this task in addition to a mentor responsible for supporting the teachers and providing them with suggestions to improve their performance in the classroom. It should also be noted here that in this stage the use of terms, collegial, collaborative, peer, coach and mentorship, were added as types of supervision that contribute to the improvement of teaching, learning and student achievement.

Goldhammer, Anderson and Krajewski (1980) also shed light on the supervision methods that appeared in the professional literature between 1850 and 1990. They classified them as scientific management, democratic interaction approach, cooperative supervision, supervision as curriculum development, clinical supervision, group dynamics and peer focus, training and educational supervision. In terms of the modern approaches to supervision, Duffy (1997) states that two types of supervision are the leading ones, namely clinical supervision and administrative control. On the other hand, Goldsberry (1988) presented three models of modern educational supervision: nominal, corrective, and reflective.

1.2 Training for classroom observation

Classroom observation is one of the effective methods used by educators to develop the teaching and learning process. Classroom observation has been defined as a process during which the observer sits in one or more study sessions, records the teacher's teaching practices and students' actions, and then meets with the teacher to discuss the observations (Wragg, 1999).
Wilcox (2000) regards classroom observation as a primary method of collecting data on what is happening in the classroom. Observation is used as an opportunity to observe experienced teachers. With teachers on duty, observation is usually part of the supervision process. The supervisor visits the teacher's class, observes the lesson and provides feedback on its effectiveness. Marshall (2009) argued that classroom observation is a form of professional development that allows critical pieces of teachers' knowledge and skills to converge in a real opportunity to gain insight into the quality of the learning experiences that are being provided. Gordove (2002) believes that any observation of lessons should be the basis for professional development.

One of the basic concepts that this study is based upon is that supervision and observation should be deemed a process leading to the professional development of teaching staff. The researcher designed a training program based on the respondents’ perceptions and their implementation of the classroom observation process with the aim of increasing awareness of internationally accepted good practices in this field.

As a general practice, observation is associated with evaluation, which is why particularly with teachers in service - it often has negative connotations (Freeman, 1982). Therefore, Ruth (2003) believes it is necessary to nominate a qualified person who can conduct the monitoring process professionally. Mulyasa (2007) argues for a new model of educational management that principals should be at least able to play the role of teacher, principal, principal, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator. The study also confirms the finding in the literature that observation may be an effective tool for improving the quality of the teaching and learning process if applied professionally and methodically (Coe, 2014; Schoenfeld, 2012; MacMahon et al., 2007; Crowe, 2001). Based on this concept of classroom observation, observers in this study were trained to implement a new method to provide teachers with constructive feedback and give teachers ample opportunity to reflect on their performance, discover their areas for development, as well as support in the implementation of the suggested actions.

1.3 The Classroom Observations in the English Language Center

The administrators conduct classroom observations in the Colleges of Technology in the Sultanate of Oman. In the English Language Center (ELC) of one of these colleges where this study was carried out, observations are performed by the head of the center and two heads of sections. These observers have not previously been trained for this process which can cause some predictable difficulties.

They implement observations using an assessment checklist with scores of 1 to 5. The observers monitor the lessons and give the teachers grades that are commensurate with their performance in that lesson from their point of view. Sometime after the observation, a feedback session is planned where the teacher and the observers meet to discuss his performance and the grade obtained. When a teacher gets a grade less than 2.8 over 5, he is given a notification message after which he will be visited again. If he does not improve his performance to receive a higher score than the mentioned average, he is often dismissed from work due to poor performance.
Due to the lack of training for the observers and an existing system of evaluation from senior management, the aim of the classroom visits is to evaluate teachers' performance rather than the professional development of teachers or the improvement of the quality of the teaching and learning. The results of the classroom visits can sometimes be very negative such as the termination of contracts. This risk causes fear from the classroom observation process. This method of observation also prompted a number of teachers to resign or move to more stable and peaceful environments. Therefore, there was a need to have a better understanding of the factors in classroom observation in the particular work context where this study took place. The research question that was aimed to be studied is as follows:

What are the changes in teachers' and observers' perceptions of the classroom observation process and its implementation at the English Language Center following an intervention in the form of a training program?

Therefore, this study aims to improve the effectiveness of the classroom observation process in the English Language Center through a needs analysis, intervention and evaluation of the changes.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted in a College of Technology, one of the seven such institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. The aim of the study was to improve the effectiveness of the classroom observation process in this context. Therefore, the participants of the study were also selected from the staff working here. There were two groups of participants: administrators who conducted classroom observations and the teaching staff who the administrators observed. The teaching staff were mainly of foreign nationals and evaluative observations are seen as a determining factor on continuation or termination of work contracts.

For the current study, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the data collection tool in order to have a deep understanding of the classroom observation process from both perspectives; observers and the teaching staff. The research methodology was qualitative and exploratory in its nature and therefore, interviews were an appropriate way to collect necessary data. The questions were prepared by the researchers and checked by Ph.D. qualified specialists from the field of education for face and construct validity. The study consisted of three main stages: pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention stages.

2.1 Pre-Intervention: Data Collection and Needs Analysis

During the first stage, three interviews with observers and twelve interviews with teaching staff were conducted. These interviews were transcribed and then analyzed thematically using Nvivo 11 software. The data analyzed in this first stage were categorized in two main parts: perceptions about the classroom observation and elements of its implementation. The data collected in the first stage from semi-structured interviews revealed that the classroom observation process recommended in college policy was not followed (e.g., there was no pre-observation conference). The results also indicated that there were concerns about the quality of the observations in the English Language Center.
Comparing and contrasting the existing perceptions and implementation with the established international practices from research literature provided a useful needs analysis regarding the classroom observation conducted in this context. This comparison was used to develop an intervention in the form of a training program for the observers.

2.2 Intervention
The second stage consisted of the intervention. After identifying the needs of the participants, a training program was designed to bridge the gap between international best practices and the existing situation at the English Language Center (ELC). As a result, the training program aimed to enhance the effectiveness of implementing the classroom observation process in the English Language Centre.

The researcher designed the intervention using some of the training program materials that were applied to train the Senior English Language Teachers in the Ministry of Education in Oman. Some extra materials have been added and some modified to suit the training objectives and the participants' needs.

The training was carried out in the ELC as the workplace seemed to be the most convenient place to have such an activity. The sessions were held from February 20 to March 15 2019. The intervention was divided into two main parts; theory and practice. The theoretical part included 5 sessions for a total of 20 hours. For the practical part, three sessions were conducted for a total of 7.5 hours. The practical part was designed for practicing conducting the pre-observation as well as post-observation stages.

The intervention was conducted by one of the researchers who was experienced in providing training programs for teachers during his career with the Ministry of Education. He was also a participant in an intensive training program for trainers to conduct similar observation training programs. For the trainees, the three administrators were trained from the English Language Center. Head of the center and heads of sections. All three administrators attended and actively participated in this training program.

2.3 Post-intervention: Data Collection and Measuring Changes
In the third and final stage of the research, the interviews conducted before the intervention were repeated with teachers and observers. The teachers were purposively selected among those who were observed after the training program for the observers. This allowed the researchers to compare the themes and responses before and after the intervention and identify any changes that occurred.

3. Findings
The aim of this study was to improve the effectiveness of the classroom observation process in context. Thus, an appropriate intervention was designed based on the needs identified in the first stage of the study. The intervention was followed up by interviews to identify what changes occurred both in the perceptions and the implementation of observations. After analyzing the results of the semi-structured interviews of this study, the results indicated the emergence of two main themes: perceptions and implementation. Regarding perceptions, four main themes emerged from them: the perceived effectiveness of classroom observation,
anxiety during and after observation, the role of teachers and the role of observers. On the other hand, the implementation theme included three subthemes, namely, pre-observation, while-observation, and post-observation.

3.1 The perception themes

The results before the intervention indicated that the observers considered the classroom observation process as part of their routine tasks. The main purpose of conducting it is to evaluate the performance of teachers, to ensure that they carry out instructions and to correct their mistakes. As for the teachers, the classroom observation was only a process of assessing and judging their performance. Also, the teachers' answers indicated that they believe that the observers lack the competence and skills necessary to perform the classroom observation professionally.

![Diagram of perception themes](image)

*Figure 1. Main themes under perceptions from the interview data analysis*

After the intervention, the perceptions of both observers and teachers on the classroom observation process changed. For observers, it became a tool to help teachers improve their performance. As for teachers, it was deemed as an opportunity to reflect on their performance and professional development. The teachers' view of the observers with regard to their competence also improved and teachers' confidence in the observers increased.

Another theme that emerged from the data analysis was anxiety of the teachers. The results before the intervention indicated that the teachers were anxious during the classroom observation process, in addition to their fear of post-observation conferences, the results of which might lead to termination of their work contracts. After the intervention, the anxiety rate decreased significantly, due to the change in the procedures and implementation of the classroom observation process.

The third and the fourth themes under the perceptions related to the role of the observers and the role of the teachers. The results before the intervention indicated that the observers took a dominant role, which was demonstrated more in the post observation conferences. In fact, the results indicated that the observers used the authoritative approach before the intervention. This has a direct impact on the role of teachers in the classroom observation process. The results showed that teachers played a passive role in this process. They were merely listening to the
observers' comments and carrying out their instructions. However, after the intervention, the relationship and roles of teachers and observers changed. The post-observation conferences saw more participation and input from the teachers. Another important point to note here is that after the intervention the focus of the observers shifted from the teachers to the learning process.

3.2 The Implementation themes
Regarding the implementation aspect, as mentioned earlier, three main themes (before, during, and after) emerged to coincide with the three phases of the classroom observation process.

Pre-observation stage was ignored prior to the intervention. The interview data indicated that the classroom observation process was carried out in a surprising manner, mostly without any prior notice to the teachers. No prior information was collected about the lessons, which led to a vague understanding for the observers when they practiced the actual observation stage. In addition, it caused anxiety and tension among the teachers. After the intervention, the pre-observation stage started taking place. Information was exchanged by observers and teachers on critical issues such as the lesson aims and expectations.

Regarding the actual observations before the intervention, it was reported in the interviews that most teachers had one visit despite the observers’ large number of classroom visits. This was due to time constraints, administrative responsibilities and a limited number of observers compared to the large number of teaching staff. The results also showed a conflict of opinion among teachers before the intervention regarding the frequency and number of class visits, as some preferred no visits, while others stated a need for multiple observations in different classes. Some teachers also mentioned that they preferred to have more than one observer per session. After the intervention and the change in the method and procedures of the classroom observation process, a major change was observed in the teachers' reactions. Their expressed levels of fear and anxiety decreased and some even stated that they wanted to have another classroom observation.

Finally, during the post-observation stage before the intervention, the observers believed that classroom observation was important because it enabled them to evaluate the performance of teachers. Therefore, the observers applied the traditional method known as the directive approach during the post observation conferences. Following this traditional supervision model, observers identified the teacher's strengths and weaknesses suggested appropriate solutions and then instructed teachers to implement them. Also, the teachers attributed great importance to the post-observation conferences. They considered it as a very worrying and crucial stage for them.
because the outcome would either enable them pass safely or could lead to the termination of their contracts. Therefore, they were always keen to carry out everything the observers asked of them, tried to satisfy and meet their needs even if they were not convinced of their comments. After the intervention, the observers adopted a non-directive approach (Freeman, 1982) in post lesson conferences, using a different and encouraging language that led to constructive feedback and professional development for teachers.

4. Discussion

4.1 The perception themes

4.1.1 Perceived effectiveness of Class observation

Interview findings collected before the intervention showed that the observers used the authoritarian approach while performing the classroom observation process. Perhaps the reason for their application of this approach is their conviction and belief in the traditional, top-down approach. The findings also indicated that the observers used the checklist as standard criteria for evaluating teachers' performance. This step negatively impacted teachers, as they considered the classroom observation process a tool used by inexperienced and incompetent people to assess and judge their performance. This finding aligns with Al-Mutairi (2016), who found that classroom observations in Kuwaiti schools are mainly implemented for teacher evaluation and not just for professional development.

However, after the intervention, the observers' perceptions of the classroom observation process changed, as the observers started using it as an instrument to improve teachers' performance. At the same time, the teacher begins looking at it as an opportunity for reflection and better performance. This change could result from the observers using a different approach to the classroom observation process after the intervention. Also, teachers receiving constructive feedback from observers positively changed the perception for both teachers and observers.

4.1.2 Anxiety during and after the classroom observation

Teachers' anxiety about the classroom observation process was one of the themes that changed significantly after the intervention. The results confirmed that the factor of fear and stress from the classroom observation process has vastly diminished. The reason for this decay is likely a change in the method and procedures of the classroom observation process. The implementation of the pre-lesson stage created a kind of reassurance among teachers, as they no longer feel that observers are targeting them. Therefore, teachers' perceptions of the classroom observation process have changed. This finding was consistent with what Bennington and Young (1983) stated about the importance of the role that pre-school plays in changing teachers' negative perceptions and removing their anxiety.

4.1.3 The role of Observers and Teachers

The role of teachers and observers in the classroom observation process was also one of the topics that changed significantly as observers abandoned the dominant role they played before the intervention and became a supportive role for teachers and focused on the learning process rather than the teacher. The reason for this change may be attributed to the observers' awareness after the intervention of the nature and role of the observer in the classroom observation process. This is supported by Carreiro, Guffey, and Rampp (1999). They advocate using a self-study method that focuses primarily on the professional development aspect of
observation rather than evaluation. The same applies to teachers. After the intervention, the teachers realized the nature and importance of their role in the classroom observation process. They dominated the classroom observation process. They had a full opportunity to reflect on their performance, diagnose difficulties and suggest appropriate solutions. The noticeable change is due to the observers’ adoption and application of the indirect approach. This is consistent with the findings of Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) of the importance of using a non-directive approach in post-class conferences.

4.2 The Implementation themes

4.2.1 Pre observation stage

The lack of application of pre-observation stage has led to a tense relationship between teachers and observers as observers surprise teachers with their class visits. This method upsets most teachers because they were not prepared or perhaps because it made them feel unreliable and targeted. After the intervention, the pre-observation stage was applied, which significantly impacted the teachers and their relationship with the observers. This finding was consistent with what Tennant (2006) said about the necessity and importance of observers meeting with teachers before the actual teacher visit in the classroom. He believes that it is vital and directly affects the type of relationship between teachers and observers and the results of the classroom observation process in general.

4.2.2 While observation

The results before the intervention showed conflicting opinions of teachers, as some wanted to be visited more than once, while others stated that only one visit was sufficient. Some teachers also said that it is preferable to have more than one observer during the class visit. The reason for some people wanting more than one visit may be their fear of the result of one visit, and therefore they wished to have another opportunity to perform better and get a high rate. As for the teachers who request the presence of more than one observer during the class visit, this may be due to their desire to reduce the observer's bias. After the intervention, a kind of satisfaction appeared among the teachers from the classroom observation process. In general, there was a tendency and desire on the teachers to increase the number of classroom visits. The reason may be due to the willingness of teachers to improve their performance and reveal their actual level. This result came parallel to what some researchers mentioned about the importance of conducting more than one visit to teachers. For example, Klinger et al. (2008) argue that a single teacher visit is insufficient and does not reflect the level of the performance. This vision is also in line with the OECD (2013), which emphasized the need for three to eight formal and informal teacher visits annually.

4.2.3 Post observation

The results before the intervention showed that the observers applied the directive approach, while they applied the non-directive approach after the intervention in the post-lesson conferences. These results clearly show that the observers before the intervention believed that the directive approach was the best way to implement the classroom observation process. However, after the intervention, this concept changed for them. Consequently, they adopted the non-directive approach, which resulted in a noticeable change in how the classroom observation process was conducted by observers and diversity in teachers' performance. Applying the non-directive approach such as the language used has improved the relationship between teachers and
observers. As a result, this led to a practical application of classroom observation. This method also enhanced teachers' self-efficacy, which affected their performance positively, as supported by Bandura (1977).

5. Conclusion

The results of this study can lead to a better understanding of the perceptions of both teachers and observers as well as knowledge of the underlying reasons for implementing the classroom observation process in a certain way. Based on the results of this study, it is possible to develop practical solutions to the problem of teachers' anxiety resulting from evaluation focused classroom observations. One of the most important ways to reduce such negative feelings and resulting poor performance was observed to be conducting pre-observations sessions. Although conducting pre-observation sessions needs more time to be dedicated, it has proven to be a great contributing factor to the success and effectiveness of the observations. Moreover, training on observation and feedback skills seem to activate teachers’ role in this process and to contribute to their professional development. Although this study was conducted in a particular tertiary education institution, it can be replicated in other contexts to identify context specific conditions and develop responsive training interventions.

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References


Examining the Impact of Perceived Cultural Distance on the Pragmatic Choices of Saudi Customers in Service Encounters

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Received: 9/2/2021 Accepted: 11/18/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
This study examines service encounters in Saudi Arabia from a pragmatic perspective. Its aim is to investigate the possible impact of perceived cultural distance between customers and service providers on pragmatic choices. It specifically examines how Saudi customers construct their service encounters when talking to service providers of the same (versus different) cultural/ethnic background in terms of discourse structure; strategies of request and internal modifications, and stylistic strategies. Three cafés with service providers of three different ethnic/cultural backgrounds are chosen. One has Saudi service providers, the second café has Arab (non-Saudi) service providers, and the third café has non-Arab service providers. Forty socially minimal service encounter interactions that take place in each café are observed and manually recorded. The study uses the framework of ‘rapport management’ by Spencer-Oatey (2002) as its approach for data analysis. The findings indicate that there are differences among the three sets of data in terms of discourse structure, the realization of the speech act of request, and the stylistic aspect of interactions. According to the special nature of service encounters, customers’ pragmatic choices are explained in terms of expressing certain degrees of social distance rather than politeness. More specifically, the closer cultural distance between customers and service providers, the more pragmatic strategies functioning to achieve more closeness and solidarity are employed.

Keywords: Cultural distance, forms of address, pragmatic choices, Saudi Arabia, service encounters

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.28
Introduction

This study examined language use in service encounters in Saudi Arabia. It specifically focused on the possible impact of perceived cultural distance on pragmatic choices by Saudi customers. The concept of perceived cultural distance in this study is borrowed from the field of social psychology. It refers to the degree to which individuals from one culture perceive individuals from other cultures to be different with regard to ethnicity, nationality, language, customs, religion, etc., (Sharma & Wu, 2015).

Since the current study focuses on examining service encounters in Saudi Arabia from a pragmatic perspective, and since there are many definitions and views of pragmatics, it is important to clarify the view that the researcher adopted in this study regarding pragmatics. Following Félix-Brasdefer (2015), the researcher views pragmatics as combining a social component which includes socio-pragmatic and cultural expectations, and a cognitive component for the interpretation of social actions.

Current research on service encounters was triggered by the pioneering work of Merritt (1976) who examined the structure of face-to-face interactions in convenience store at an American university campus. Consequently, researchers around the globe were motivated to examine language use in service encounters. Pragmatic research on service encounters in particular has received great attention by researchers in different languages during the last a few decades (e.g., Bataller, 2015; Economidou-Kogesidis, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Michno, 2019). However, in Saudi Arabia and to the best of my knowledge this is the first and the only study to date that has examined language use in service encounters. Moreover, while numerous researchers have considered the impact of factors such as gender, social distance, region, social class in their examination of service encounters in other languages, the possible impact of perceived cultural distance was not explored yet.

Saudi Arabia represents an interesting context for examining service encounters from a pragmatic perspective with particular focus on the possible impact of perceived cultural distance on pragmatic choices by speakers. This is not just because service encounters in Saudi Arabia were not studied before, but also the majority of people working in shops are migrant workers coming from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds. According to the most recent census of population in Saudi Arabia which was conducted in 2017, the number of migrant workers is estimated to be 12,143,974 (Saudi General Authority for Statistics, 2017). This number represents 36.8% of the whole population and constitutes the majority of the labour force in Saudi Arabia (De Bel-Air, 2018). In fact, Saudi Arabia relies heavily on these migrant workers to do many jobs ranging from those requiring no skills to those of high skills (Rajan & Oommen, 2020). These include jobs such as nurses, technicians, janitors, construction labourers, drivers, salespersons, barbers, cleaners and domestic workers (Rajan & Oommen, 2020). The majority of these migrant workers come from two broad regions: Asia (South and Southeast Asia) including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Philippines, and several Arab countries including Egypt, Yemen and Sudan (Rajan & Oommen, 2020).

Based on this complex ethnic/cultural diversity in Saudi business/service sector, the present study is concerned with exploring Saudi customers’ linguistic behavior in relation to this diversity. It will specifically examine the extent to which perceived cultural distance affects...
Saudi customers’ pragmatic choices. For this purpose, naturally occurring service encounters at three cafés will be compared and contrasted. One café has Saudi service providers, the second café has Arab (non-Saudi) service providers, and the third café has non-Arab service providers. In order to get as naturally occurring data as possible, non-participant observation will be used and data will be recorded manually. The data collected for this study was analyzed according to Spencer-Oatey’s (2002) illocutionary, discourse and stylistic categories for the analysis of ‘rapport management’.

This study is guided by the two following research questions:

1. How do Saudi customers construct their service encounters when talking to service providers of the same cultural/ethnic background in relation to discourse structure; strategies of request and internal modifications, and stylistic strategies?
2. How do Saudi customers construct their service encounters when talking to service providers from different cultural/ethnic background in relation to discourse structure; strategies of request and internal modifications, and stylistic strategies?

The main objective of this study is to examine the extent to which perceived cultural distance affects customers’ pragmatic choices in service encounters.

**Literature Review**

**Overview of Service Encounters**

*Service encounters* refer to interactions between a customer and a server taken place in formal and informal institutional settings such as markets, small shops, cafés, grocery stores, bookshops, travel agencies, and medical and governmental front-desks (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). Interactions in service encounters can be carried out in an actual service setting (i.e., face-to-face), online, in writing via mail, or over the phone (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). In this study I adopt the term *service encounters* for face-to-face interactions that take place at a designated commercial setting (cafés) in which some kind of commodity (e.g., food, drinks) is exchanged between a customer and a vendor.

*Service encounters* typically include openings, negotiations of the exchange, and closings (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). Generally, there are two types of service encounters: socially minimal service encounters and socially expanded service encounters. Socially minimal service encounters include openings, negotiations of the exchange, and closings, while socially expanded service encounters also include discussion on interpersonal topics (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). Moreover, service encounters always involve the speech act of request (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2005). This might be a request for information relating to the exchange (e.g., price or availability of a product) or request for action on the part of the interlocutor (i.e., seller or server) (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2005).

Filliettaz (2005) regarded service encounters as a social practice that is mediated by various linguistic and pragmatic strategies which make them “far more complex and unpredictable than we intuitively imagine them to be” (p. 105). In addition to their transactional function, service encounters comprise of interpersonal functions as well (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). Interpersonal functions enable interlocutors in service encounters to maintain and establish social relationships...
in greeting, phatic talk, thanking, and expressing a comment that is outside the main transactional task (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). Moreover, service encounters are context sensitive. The situational context where service encounters take place contributes to constituting them and at the same time it reflects various social aspects of their context (Filliettaz, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015).

**Pragmatic Studies on Service Encounters**

Reviewing literature on service encounters showed an existence of a large body of work that examined this area from a pragmatic perspective in different languages. However, pragmatic study of service encounters in the Arabic-speaking World and in the Saudi context in particular is still an understudied area. In the following the researcher will establish the departure point for the current study by providing a brief overview of relevant previous pragmatic studies on service encounters. This will be accompanied by highlighting the research gap that this study will attempt to fill.

Most pragmatic studies on service encounters were conducted from two dominant perspectives: cross-cultural pragmatics and variational pragmatics. The former included studies that typically focused on pragmatic similarities and differences in service encounters between different languages (Schneider & Barron, 2008). For example, Economidou-Kogesidis (2005) compared politeness strategies in service encounters between Greek and British English. The focus in Economidou-Kogesidis’s (2005) study was on the degree of directness in the realization of the speech act of request between customers of the two languages. Moreover, Félix-Brasdefer’s (2015) investigation pragmatic similarities and differences in service encounters between American English and Mexican Spanish. Félix-Brasdefe’s (2015) study focused on characteristics of transactional and relational talk, pragmatic and discursive functions of relational talk and address forms, and the realization of politeness in the two languages.

Studies on service encounters from the perspective of variational pragmatics focused on how language use varies within a single language (Schneider & Barron, 2008). In fact, most recent work on variational pragmatics including work on service encounters was inspired by Labov’s (1972) pioneer work on linguistic variation from a sociolinguistic perspective. Regarding factors conditioning pragmatic variation, Schneider and Barron (2008) identified two categories of factors. These included macro-social factors which are relatively stable (e.g., region, social class, ethnicity, gender and age) and situational micro-social factors (e.g., power and social distance) (Schneider & Barron, 2008).

The influence of these factors on language use in service encounters has been examined in numerous studies. For example, Bataller (2015) studied pragmatic variation of service encounters in Spanish based on the factor of region by comparing and contrasting interactions at cafeterias in two different regions in Spain: Granada and Valencia. Moreover, Bataller (2019) investigated pragmatic strategies used to make requests by customers at four corner stores in two cities in Colombia: Bucaramanga in the eastern Andean region of the country and Cartagena on the Caribbean coast. While the two previous studies focused on pragmatic variation of service encounters across regions in the same country (at the national level), there are other studies that focused on pragmatic variation across countries that speak the same language. For example,
Félix-Brasdefer and Yates (2019) examined pragmatic variation of service encounters in small shops in Mexico, Argentina and Spain.

Gender and pragmatic variation in service encounters has received great attention by researchers as well. For instance, Antonopoulou (2001) examined gender and politeness in Greek service encounters. Moreover, Félix-Brasdefer (2012) explored the role of gender in pragmatic variation in market service encounters in Mexico. Similarly, but with particular focus on address forms selection, Michno (2019) studied gender and pragmatic variation in corner-store service encounters interactions in Nicaragua.

Social distance which refers to the degree of familiarity between interlocuters has received some attention in service encounters research. Torres (2019), for instance, examined the effect of social distance on pragmatic choices in cafeteria service encounters in Puerto Rico. In this study, Torres (2019) showed how the degree of familiarity between service providers and clients played a significant role on the pragmalinguistic structure of requests by customers.

Based on the review presented above, it is clear that both macro-social factors and micro-social factors affecting pragmatic choices in service encounters have received great attention in literature. However, the possible impact of cultural distance between customers and service on pragmatic choices has not been considered in previous work on service encounters. In fact, this is not only the case with pragmatic research on service encounters, but also with other scholarly work on pragmatics in general as well. For instance, the seminal work of Brown and Levenson (1987) of Politeness Theory and other theoretical frameworks influenced by this theory have focused on three factors; namely power, social distance and ranking of imposition.

**Cultural Distance and Service Encounters**

Although the possible impact of ethnic/cultural differences between customers and service providers has not been considered in previous pragmatic work on service encounters, it has been considered in the social psychological work on intercultural service encounters. More specifically, the impact of “perceived cultural distance” on certain service outcomes has been the concern of a number of studies on intercultural service encounters (e.g., Ang, Liou & Wei, 2018; Sharma & Wu, 2015; Sharma, Tam & Kim, 2012). Perceived cultural distance (PCD) refers to the degree to which individuals from one culture perceive individuals from other cultures to be different with regard to ethnicity, nationality, language, customs, religion, etc., (Sharma & Wu, 2015).

Research in social psychology suggests that similarity in individuals’ cultural characteristics (low PCD) increases harmony during human interactions, while differences (high PCD) generate dislikability (Etgar & Fuchs, 2011). Based on this view, a number of researchers were motivated to examine the impact of PCD in the context of intercultural service encounters. Findings of studies on this issue have shown that customers tend to perceive service outcomes such as service quality and customer satisfaction more favorably if service providers come from the same (vs different) culture (e.g., Ang, Liou & Wei, 2018; Sharma & Wu, 2015; Sharma et al., 2012).
The current study borrows the notion of perceived cultural distance that was explained above to find out whether it has any impact on customers’ pragmatic choices. Accordingly, findings of this study will add a fresh perspective to the extant literature on pragmatic study of service encounters.

**Method**

**Participants**

The data corpus of the current study includes naturally occurring service encounter interactions taken place in three cafés which are located in the same neighborhood in Jeddah city. This neighborhood is located in an area which can be characterized as middle class. The choice of these cafés is based on the ethnic/cultural background (nationality) of service providers. In fact, these cafés conduct business in an almost identical way and their setting and products are very similar; the only difference is the ethnic/cultural background (nationality) of service providers. One café has male Saudi service providers, the second café has male Egyptian service providers, and the third café has male Indian service providers. In order to collect data in these cafés, owners were approached by the researcher and they were provided with an explanation of the nature of the project, and permissions were granted.

The data were specifically taken from socially minimal service encounters which are limited to no more than openings, negotiations of the exchange, and closings. The data corpus of the study consisted of 120 brief interactions; 40 interactions taken place in each one of the three cafés mentioned above. Accordingly, there were three sets of data based on the nationality (ethnic/cultural background) of service providers. Considering the focus of this study which is merely on the linguistic behavior of Saudi customers, the data corpus consisted only of talk directed by them. The data corpus also consisted only of interactions by customers who appeared not to be familiar with service providers. Interactions with customers who seem to be regular were not included. This decision is taken in order to get homogeneous data corpus with regard to the degree of social distance (familiarity) between interlocutors.

Moreover, considering the highly conservative nature of the Saudi context with regard to sex segregation, only interactions between male customers and male service providers were included. The age factor will not be accounted for in this study and only interactions by adult customers will be included. Information about age can only be estimated as will be explained in the next section.

**Instrument**

Data were collected using non-participant observation. Data were recorded manually by the researcher on an observation sheet that was specially designed for this purpose. Only specific parts of interactions by customers were noted down. These include opening, main request and closing. This was done without approaching customers for any further information. Collecting data using this way was used in a number of sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies, and proved to be effective when studying particular linguistic features and strategies (e.g., Antonopoulou, 2002; Salazar & Orts, 2018). In fact, using this way for collecting data was pioneered by Labov (1972) in his famous study of (r) stratifications in New York department stores. The motive to use such way for gathering data is to overcome the “researcher’s paradox”, which refers to the possible influence of the presence of the observer on the data (Labov, 1972). Therefore, applying
non-participant observation and manually recording data in the current study would enable the researcher to get naturally occurring data which are regarded in such studies as “essential to get a clear idea of the workings of language” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s, 2005, p. 29).

Procedures of the Study

Regarding the actual conduct of data collection for the current study, the researcher was sitting in a spot behind the service counter near the service provider so clear hearing of interactions could be possible. In the three chosen cafés, the service provider will be usually standing up behind the service counter and customers have to make their way to the service counter. They make their order, pay, and collect their orders. The researcher was sitting in a position that does not pose any inconvenience or suspicion. He would look like one of the staff members busy doing some paper work. Gazing and eye contact with customers will be avoided.

Age of customers was roughly estimated and only interactions by adult customers were observed. Regarding the degree of familiarity between customers and service providers, this was inferred from the way the interaction was handled between the interlocutors and further check if needed was done with service providers after customers have left. The time needed for getting the required data was six weeks; from the beginning of March till the mid of April 2020 and it was done during different times of the day.

An important aspect that the researcher had to consider is the identification of the nationality (ethnic/cultural background) of service providers by Saudi customers. In fact, based on the facial features and physical characteristics of individuals, it would not be difficult to identify their ethnic/cultural backgrounds (Fong & Chuang, 2004). This assumption is further eased by the exclusive ethnic/cultural background belonging of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. As indicated previously migrant workers in Saudi Arabia come from two groups of countries: Middle East and Asia. Individuals of these two groups of countries have their own distinct physical appearance which makes it easy to distinguish between them.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Spencer-Oatey’s (2002) analytical framework of ‘rapport management’ which examines how individuals build, maintain, or threaten relationships with others through language. Spencer-Oatey (2002) distinguishes five interrelated domains that play a significant role in the management of rapport: discourse, illocutionary, participation, stylistic and non-verbal domain. The discourse domain is concerned with the structure of the interactions, the illocutionary domain focuses on the realization and interpretation of speech acts, the participation domain examines the procedural aspects of exchanges, the stylistic domain analyses aspects such as honorifics, forms of address, and choice of tone, and the non-verbal domain focuses non-verbal aspects such as gestures and body movements (Spencer-Oatey, 2002).

Considering the nature of this study and its purpose, three of the above-mentioned domains were used to analyze the collected data. These include discourse, illocutionary and stylistic domain. In fact, these three domains are particularly relevant to the analysis of service encounter interactions (Placencia, 2008; Torres, 2019; Bataller, 2015). In Torres’s (2019) words, these three domains are “especially pertinent to service encounter interactions” (p. 231).
following the researcher will explain how the collected data were analyzed using these three domains.

**Analysis of Discourse Domain**

The discourse domain in service encounters is concerned with the use of rapport-enhancing devices by interlocutors such as greeting expressions, thanking expressions, and leave-takings (Antonopoulou, 2001). More specifically, the two most important aspects of the discourse domain in service encounters include opening and closing of the transaction (Bataller, 2015; Torres, 2019). While these two aspects are regarded as interactional, the part where customers preform the main service request which will be discussed in the next section, is regarded as transactional (Antonopoulou, 2001). The function of openings is “to lubricate the transition from noninteraction to interaction, and to ease the potentially awkward tension of the early moments of the encounter”; while the function of closings is to ease “the transition from full interaction to departure” Laver (1975, p. 218, as cited in Bataller, 2015, p. 122).

To analyze data related to this domain, first, expressions used by Saudi customers for opening and closing transactions were classified into categories. Absence of expressions related to opening and closing transactions were observed as well. The frequency and percentage of expressions used in the opening and closing of the transaction in each of the three data sets were calculated. Second, the results of the three data sets were compared and contrasted to reveal similarities and differences between them.

**Analysis of Illocutionary Domain**

The illocutionary domain in service encounters is concerned with the transactional part of the encounters in which customers make their main requests (Antonopoulou, 2001). In order to analyze collected data related to this domain, a modified version of Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper’s (1989) coding scheme of request head act strategies and internal modifications was used. Based on this coding scheme, requests are usually performed using a variety of directness level, and internal and/or external modifications (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

Regarding the directness level of requests, three possible levels were identified: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Internal modifications include linguistic elements appearing in the same act while external modifications include devices in the linguistic context surrounding the speech act (Deveci & Hmida, 2017).

Considering the special nature of requests in service encounters in which there is no real imposition involved and requests have to be relatively clear, non-conventionally indirect strategies of requests and external modifications are not expected to be used (Antonopoulou, 2001; Bataller, 2015; Placencia, 2008). Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that while Blum-Kulka et al’s (1989) coding scheme was used as the main system for classifying request strategies in this study, various works on request strategies in Arabic language (e.g., Alfattah & Ravindranath, 2009; Tawalbeh & Al-Oqaily, 2012) and in service encounters in other languages were referred to as well (Bataller, 2015; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Michno, 2019; Placencia, 2008; Torres, 2019). Direct request in Arabic service encounters can be realized in the form of: 1) commands or imperatives (e.g., *ateni lateeh* ‘give me a latte’); 2) want statements (e.g., *abgha latteh* ‘I want a latte’); 3) ellipticals (e.g., *lateeh* ‘latte’). Conventionally indirect strategies of
request in Arabic service encounters are usually realized using query ability (e.g., *mumken tateni lateeh* ‘can you give me a latte’). Internal modifications accompanying requests in Arabic service encounters can include politeness markers (e.g., *fadlan* ‘please’).

To analyze data related to this domain, the frequency and percentage of request strategies and internal modifications used to make service requests in each of the three data sets were calculated. Absence of internal modifications will be noted as well. This was followed by comparing and contrasting the results of the analysis of the three data sets to reveal similarities and differences between them. It should be mentioned here that the analysis focused only on the first service request made by a customer. Requests for favors that might have come after the main service request made by a customer were not included in the main analysis.

**Analysis of Stylistic Domain**

In this domain, terms used by customers to address service providers were analyzed. Absence of terms of address were considered as well. After conducting the quantitative analysis, a qualitative analysis of the used terms of address was conducted to reveal their social significance and interpersonal function. Results emerging from the three data sets were compared and contrasted to reveal similarities and differences between them.

**Results**

Results emerged from data analysis are divided into three sections. The first section reports on analysis of discourse structure of service encounters. The second section reports on analysis of illocutionary domain of service encounters. Finally, the third section reports on analysis of stylistic domain. As explained previously the data corpus of this study consists of three data sets. The first data set includes talk directed by Saudi customers to Saudi service providers, the second data set includes talk directed by Saudi customers to Arab (non-Saudi) service providers, and the third data set includes talk directed by Saudi customers to non-Arab service providers. For the purpose of clarity, the first data set will be referred to as SS group, the second data set will be referred to as SA group, and the third data set will be referred to as SN group.

**Analysis Results of Discourse Domain**

**Openings**

This section focuses on showing similarities/differences between the three groups in terms of distribution (absence/presence) of greetings and the preferred greeting expressions.

Table one presents results of distribution of presence and absence of greetings in the three groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS Group</th>
<th>SA Group</th>
<th>SN Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No greeting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No greeting</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table one shows, the three groups have a great similarity in terms of initiating service encounters with greetings. Almost all customers in the three groups began service encounters with greeting. More specifically, 100% of customers in the SS group used greetings, 95% of the SA group, and 95% of the SN group.

Table two presents results of used greeting expressions by customers in the three groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greeting expressions</th>
<th>SS Group</th>
<th>SA Group</th>
<th>SN Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asalamu alaikum ‘peace be upon you’</td>
<td>20 50%</td>
<td>35 85%</td>
<td>38 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sabah alkhair ’good morning’ masa alkhair ‘good evening’</td>
<td>12 30%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combinations</td>
<td>8 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No greeting</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40 100%</td>
<td>40 100%</td>
<td>40 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table two indicates, although the three groups are similar in terms of distribution (absence/presence) of greeting, the preferred greeting expressions were different. While the use of the greeting expression asalamu alaikum ‘peace be upon you’ is common among the three groups, using other greeting expressions differs. Customers in the SS group tended to use the expressions of sabah alkhair ‘good morning’ and masa alkhair ‘good evening’ (30%) more frequently than customers in the SA group (10%) and SN group (0%). Combination strategies were used by (20%) of customers in the SS group, while this does not exist in the other two groups. Combination strategies include the use of the expression asalamu alaikum ‘peace be upon you’ in company with expressions such as sabah alkhair ‘good morning’ or masa alkhair ‘good evening’.

Closings
This section focuses on showing similarities/differences between the three groups in terms of distribution (absence/presence) of thanking and preferred thanking expressions.

Table three shows results of distribution of presence and absence of thanking in the three groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thanking</th>
<th>SS Group</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>SA Group</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>SN Group</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thanking</td>
<td>39 97.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 62.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No thanking</td>
<td>1 2.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 37.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table three shows, there is a difference between the three groups in terms of closing service encounters with thanking on the part of customers. SS group showed the highest frequency of closing service encounters with thanking service providers (97.5%). SA group came next in terms of the number of ending encounters with thanking service providers (62.5%).
Finally, SN group showed the least number of closing service encounters with thanking service providers (35%).

Table four presents results of used thanking expressions by customers in the three groups.

Table 4. Distribution of thanking expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thanking expressions</th>
<th>SS Group</th>
<th>SA Group</th>
<th>SN Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shukran ‘thanks’</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yateek alafiah ‘May God give you health’</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salent ‘be well’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combinations</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No thanking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the preferred thanking expressions by customers, the three groups varied greatly. As Table four shows, while SS group mainly used combination strategies of thanking (55%), these were never used by the SA and SN groups. Combinations of thanking expressions include the use of shukran ‘thanks’ in company with the expression yateek alafiah ‘May God give you health’. They also include the use of the expression salent ‘be well’ with the expression yateek alafiah ‘May God give you health’. It is noteworthy to mention that when thanking expressions are used at all by customers in the SA group and SN group, they mainly include the use of shukran ‘thanks’; SA group (50%) and SN group (30%). Only five times the expression yateek alafiah ‘May God give you health’ was used by customers in the SA group, and two times by customers in the SN group.

Analysis of Illocutionary Domain

In this section, the researcher presents results related to the main request strategies and internal mitigating devices used by customers to make their service encounter requests. As specified previously, an adapted version of Blum-Kulka et al’s (1989) coding scheme was used to classify the main request strategies and internal mitigating devices.

Request Head Act Strategies

Table five presents results of the distribution of request head act strategies in the three groups.

Table 5. Distribution of request head act strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request strategies</th>
<th>SS Group</th>
<th>SA Group</th>
<th>SN Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliptical</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table five, request head act strategies used by customers in the three groups vary greatly. While direct request strategies were used more frequently by customers in the SA group (92.5%) and in the SN group (97.5%), they were only used by (45%) of customers in the SS group. On the contrary, while the indirect request strategies were almost non-existent in the SA group and SN group; (7.5%) and (2.5%), respectively, they were used by (55%) of customers in the SS group. It is clear then that SS group have a clear preference for indirect request strategies in comparison to the SA group and SN group who have a strong preference for direct request strategies.

Three direct request sub-strategies were used by customers of the three groups in this study. These include commands (e.g., \textit{ateni wahid lateeh} ‘give me one latte‘), want statements (e.g., \textit{abgha wahid espresso} ‘I want one espresso’), and ellipticals (e.g., \textit{ethneen moka} ‘two mocha’). The three groups showed a big difference regarding the preferred direct request sub-strategies. While ellipticals were used by (57.5%) of customers in the SA group and by (62.5%) of the SN group, they were only used by (20%) of customers in the SS group. The same trend is observed in the use of commands as well. This direct request sub-strategy is used by (27.5%) of customers in the SA group and by (32.5%) of the SN group, and only by (12.5%) of the SS group. The want sub-strategy seems to be the least preferred direct request sub-strategy by all groups. It was used by (7.5%) of customers in the SS group, (12.5%) of the SA group and (2.5%) of the SN group.

Regarding the indirect request strategies, the SS group showed the highest level of preference for using these strategies. As shown in Table five, while the indirect request strategies were used by (55%) of customers in the SS group, they were very rare in the SA group and SN group; (7.5%) and (2.5%), respectively. The indirect request strategy used in this study comes in the form of query ability (e.g., \textit{mumkin tateni shai bi alnina} ‘can you give me one tea with mint?’).

\textit{Internal Modifications}

The other analytical element in the illocutionary domain is the use of internal modifications embedded in the request proper. Table six presents results of the distribution of internal modifications in the three groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal modification</th>
<th>SS Group</th>
<th>SA Group</th>
<th>SN Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness marker: \textit{lu samaht} ‘if you would permit’ \textit{min fadlak} ‘please’ \textit{lu takaramt} ‘if you would’ \textit{bidun amr aleek} ‘without ordering you’</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Internal modification</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table six shows, customers in the SS group used more internal modifications (92.5%) than customers in the SA group (32.5%) and in the SN group (20%). While there are many internal mitigating devices that were identified in the general literature on pragmatics (e.g., downtoners, understaters, hesitators...etc.), results of the current study showed that the only internal mitigating device used by customers in this study is politeness markers. These politeness markers come in the form of expressions such as \textit{lu samaht} ‘if you would permit’ and \textit{min fadlak} ‘please’. When these expressions were used by customers, they are used with both direct and conventionally indirect requests.

Examples of using politeness markers with different direct request strategies include the following:

1. A politeness marker accompanying a command: 
   \textit{adeni Spanish lateeh lu samaht.} 
   Give me Spanish latte, if you would permit.

2. A politeness marker accompanying a want statement: 
   \textit{abi athneen espriso bdoon sukar min fadlak.} 
   I want two espresso without sugar please.

3. A politeness marker accompanying an elliptical: 
   \textit{lu samaht wahid kahwah turki.} 
   If you would permit, one Turkish coffee.

Examples of using politeness markers with conventionally indirect requests include the following: 

\textit{mumkin tajeeb li wahid kroson bi aljobn min fadlak?} 
Can you bring me one crossonate with cheese please?

\textbf{Analysis of Stylistic Domain}

In the stylistic domain, the researcher looked at the distribution of forms of address. Table 7 presents results of the distribution of presence and absence of forms of address in the three groups.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Forms of address} & \textbf{SS Group} & \textbf{SA Group} & \textbf{SN Group} \\
\hline
\text{Frequency} & \text{\%} & \text{Frequency} & \text{\%} & \text{Frequency} & \text{\%} \\
\hline
Form of address & 18 & 45\% & 21 & 52.5\% & 23 & 57.5\% \\
\hline
No forms of address & 22 & 55\% & 19 & 47.5\% & 17 & 42.5\% \\
\hline
Total & 40 & 100\% & 40 & 100\% & 40 & 100\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Distribution of presence and absence of forms of address}
\end{table}

As Table seven shows, there is no huge difference between the three groups in terms of the frequency of using forms of address. While forms of address were used by (45\%) of customers in the SS group, they were used by (52.5\%) and (57.5\%) by customers in the SA group and SN group, respectively. However, the three groups showed great inconsistency in terms of the specific forms of address used favored by customers in each group.

Table eight presents results of used forms of address by customers in the three groups.
As Table eight shows, there is a steady pattern for using specific forms of address by customers in each group. Customers in the SS group, for instance, when addressing Saudi service providers use names such as *akhoi* ‘brother’ (17.5%); *yateeb* ‘good guy’ (15%); *habibi* ‘beloved’ (12.5%). Examples of this in full utterances include the following:

1. *shukran habibi*
   ‘Thanks beloved’

2. *yateeb mumkin wahid lateeh lu samaht*
   ‘good guy, can I have one mocha if you would permit’

3. *wahid lateeh min fadlak akhoi*
   ‘One latte brother, please’

Customers in the SA group, when addressing Arab (non-Saudi) service providers use names such as *mohamid* ‘Mohammed’ (45%); *yateeb* ‘good guy’ (2.5%); *habibi* ‘beloved’ (5%). Examples of this in full utterances include the following:

1. *mohamid athneen kortado sukar mazboot*
   ‘Mohammed, two cortado with sugar’

2. *habibi jeeb le wahid shai nena*
   ‘beloved, bring me one tea with mint’

Customers in the SN group, when addressing non-Arab (non-Saudi) service providers use names such as *mohamid* ‘Mohammed’ (35%); *sadik* ‘friend’ (22.5%). Examples of this in full utterances include the following:

1. *sadik athneen espresso bdoon sukar*
   ‘friend, two espresso without sugar’

2. *shukran mohamid*
   ‘Thanks Mohammed’

**Discussion**

This study examined naturally-occurring service encounters at three cafés in Saudi Arabia. It focused on examining the extent to which cultural distance between customers and service providers can have an impact on pragmatic choices by the former. Three cafés with service providers of three different ethnic/cultural backgrounds were chosen. To compare and contrast customers’ pragmatic strategies in these three settings, an analysis of the discourse, illocutionary, and stylistic domain was conducted.
The analysis at the discourse level showed that Saudi customers tended to use different discourse structures in service encounters based on the extent of cultural distance between them and service providers. This became clear when analyzing openings and closings of service encounters. In spite of the fact that the analysis of the openings did not show any significant difference between the three groups in terms of distribution, in which almost all Saudi customers initiated their service encounters with greetings regardless of the ethnic/cultural backgrounds of service providers, the preferred greeting expressions in the three groups varied greatly.

The greeting expression *asalamu alaikum* ‘peace be upon you’ was the most commonly used expression by customers in the three groups. This expression is the most popular and basic greeting expression in Arabic and Islamic culture. However, when greeting service providers of the same ethnic/cultural background, Saudi customers tended to use longer greeting expressions. This include the use of *asalamu alaikum* ‘peace be upon you’ in company with other expressions such as *sabah alkhair* ‘good morning’ or *masa alkhair* ‘good evening’. This shows that Saudi customers tended to show more closeness and friendliness to service providers of the same ethnic/cultural background.

The analysis of the closings of service encounters reflects a similar tendency found in the analysis of the openings of service encounters discussed above. The analysis showed that when talking to service providers of the same ethnic/cultural background, Saudi customers tend to close service encounters with thanking expressions more frequently compared to those with service providers of different ethnic/cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the analysis showed that when closing service encounters, Saudi customers tended to use longer thanking expressions such *shukran Allah yateek alafiah* ‘thanks, and may Allah give your health’. The use of such long thanking expressions by customers make their interactions “appear more personal” (Bataller, 2015, p. 132). On the other hand, Saudi customers construct brief thanking expressions when talking to service providers of different ethnic/cultural backgrounds, which mostly include the expression *shukran* ‘thanks’ which is the most common and basic thanking expression in the Arabic culture.

Overall, it is clear that Saudi customers’ choice of discourse structures is influenced by the perceived cultural distance between them and their interlocutors. This is evident in the differences discussed above between the three groups related to openings and closings of service encounters. The differences were not just in terms of the distribution (absence and presence) of openings and closings of service encounters, but also in terms of the preferred expressions. As has been shown above, Saudi customers tend to use longer opening and closing expressions when dealing with service providers of the same ethnic/cultural background.

It could be argued that the differences between the three groups might be due to the different linguistic background. However, the second group of service providers come from the same linguistic background of customers and the analysis still showed different results compared to those related to greetings and thanking directed by Saudi customers to Saudi service providers. Considering the fact that customers and service providers in all three groups are not familiar with each other, one possible explanation for using such long expressions is to achieve more solidarity and friendliness based on shared ethnic/cultural background.
At the illocutionary level, the analysis showed clear differences between the three groups. When dealing with service providers of the same ethnic/cultural background, Saudi customers prefer to use conventionally indirect strategies to make their requests and these are usually accompanied by internal modifications. On the contrary, when dealing with service providers of different ethnic/cultural backgrounds, Saudi customers prefer to use direct request strategies with hardly any internal modifications. The further cultural distance between customers and service providers, the more direct request strategies and less internal modifications are used by customers.

In general, using indirect request strategies and internal modifications is associated with achieving more politeness. However, in service encounters the case is different. This is due to the fact that when making a request in service encounters there is no real imposition involved so speakers need to mitigate it (Bataller, 2015; Danblon, de Clerck & van Noppen, 2005). Requests in service encounters can be considered as a special type of request that does not pose any threat to the requestee’s face as “the receiver has more to gain than the person making the request in this economic system of open competition” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005, p. 36). Therefore, when a customer uses internal modifications in their request in service encounters, these could be regarded as ways to show friendliness rather than ways to soften imposition results from making a request (Danblon et al., 2005).

At the stylistic level, the analysis showed great differences between the three groups in terms of the specific forms of address used by customers in each group. When addressing Saudi service providers, Saudi customers tend exclusively to use two categories of address terms: kin terms and terms of endearment. Examples of these two categories include: akhoi ‘brother’ and yateeb ‘good guy’. Although kin terms are normally used to indicate blood relations, they have been extended beyond that to include non-relatives (Alenizi, 2019). According to Alenizi (2019) when terms of address of these two categories are used by speakers of Saudi Arabic to address strangers, they are meant to show “respect and display solidarity” (p. 234).

A striking observation in the analysis of the stylistic level relates to addressing non-Saudi (no-Arab) service providers. Two categories of terms of address are used by Saudi customers in this context: common names and terms of endearment. The common name that was used in this context is mohamid ‘Mohammed’ which is the name of the prophet in Islam (peace be upon him). In Saudi Arabia, the famous name “Mohammed” is usually used to address workers from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan etc. if their names are unknown (Alenizi, 2019). In spite of the fact that this name has a special significance in Islamic culture, its use in this way has given it a negative meaning. According to Sharawi (2013), “the name Mohammad has come to be associated with any person whose name we don’t know and denotes inferiority which contradicts our love and respect for the Prophet (pbuh)” (p. 1). As a result of this use of the name “Mohammed”, Saudis generally would not appreciate it to be addressed by this name by strangers since it is commonly used to address migrant workers especially from eastern Asian countries.

The second category of terms of address used by Saudi customers to address non-Saudi (no-Arab) service providers is terms of endearment. These include the term sadik ‘friend’. In fact, this term is used by many Saudis to only call migrant workers from eastern Asian countries.
Although this term is basically classified as a term of endearment, its use to address this group of people has associated it with inferiority. This becomes clear from Saudis’ reaction when they are mistakenly addressed by it as they don’t feel comfortable if someone calls them using this term. Moreover, the negative connotation of this term can be inferred from its humorous use among close friends. When a Saudi person wants to tease a close friend, he would use this term to address him.

It is very clear from these findings that the chosen terms of address are impacted by the perceived cultural distance between customers and service providers. In fact, these findings correspond to the existing argument relating to the function of terms of address in which they play a significant role in expressing and managing interpersonal relationships. Clyne, Norrby, and Warren (2009), for instance, state that address forms function to “express a degree of social distance, common ground and group boundaries” (p. 79). More specifically, Placencia (2015) argue that functions of various terms of address can include: “respect, closeness, trust, distance, familiarity, solidarity or a lack of it, intimacy, warmth, affection (in)equality, hierarchy, impatience, anger, annoyance, condescension, contempt, servility and humiliation” (p. 38).

Based on the results and discussion presented above, this study argues that perceived cultural distance plays a significant role in the choice of pragmatic strategies by speakers. Although previous work has recognized a number of factors influencing the choice of pragmatic strategies (e.g., power, social distance, social class, gender...etc.), this study claims a novel contribution to this area by recognizing perceived cultural distance as an influential factor as well. As it was explained in previously, this study borrows the concept of perceived cultural distance from the field of social psychology. According to studies that examined the impact of perceived cultural distance on service outcomes such as service quality and customer satisfaction, it has been found that customers tend to perceive service outcomes more favorably if service providers come from the same (vs different) culture. Similarly, results of this study confirm the impact of perceived cultural distance on customers but on their pragmatic choices. More specifically, the closer the perceived cultural distance between interlocutors, the more pragmatic strategies that are supposed to achieve more solidarity and friendliness are employed by speakers.

**Conclusion**

The present study focused on examining the potential impact of perceived cultural distance on pragmatic choices by Saudi customers in service encounters. Findings of this study revealed that customers tend to construct their interactions in a way that expresses more solidarity and friendliness when their interlocutors come from the same/similar ethnic/cultural background. Since this factor has not been recognized in previous research on factors influencing pragmatic choices, this study claims that these findings might be regarded as a novel contribution to the area. Nevertheless, more research is needed to provide more insights on this idea. Although this study has used naturally occurring interactions which are supposed to provide authentic data, the small number of interactions might limit the results of this study. Also, due to the specific nature of service encounters in cafés, more studies are needed to be conducted in other business sectors. Finally, since this study focused only on interactions between individuals who are not familiar with each other, further research examining the impact of the degree of familiarity along with cultural distance is expected to enrich this area.
Examining the Impact of Perceived Cultural Distance

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References


Investigation into Common Errors in English Writing among Non-Academic Staff at a Malaysian Public University

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Received: 10/3/2021    Accepted: 12/5/2021    Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
The Malaysian government has long recognized the significance of mastering the English language among its citizenry. The government has planned, and subsequently, implemented many policies to ensure Malaysians master the English language. Although civil servants have a strong desire to master the English language to perform their duties more efficiently, poor English communication skills have become a major concern in this regard. Therefore, this research aims to investigate common errors in writing the English language among non-academic staff at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), a public university in Malaysia. The study employed an Error Analysis approach by conducting document analysis where every respondent was required to write a paragraph in the English language in about 150-200 words on the topic “My greatest challenge as a UniSZA officer”. The findings revealed that a sizeable number of non-academic staff committed different types of errors in writing the English language, including errors related to subject-verb agreement, passive voice, plurality, choice of word, omission of word, use of article, tense sequence, word ordering, gerund, addition of word/redundancy, and comparison of adjective. It was observed that lack of linguistic skills, lack of exposure, and inadequate practices in written English were the main factors contributing to the English writing errors among the non-academic staff. These findings could help the university management to develop appropriate programs that can assist the non-academic staff to develop English writing competence. However, this study is limited to English writing errors. Further research may focus on other language skills such as speaking and listening.

Keywords: English language, common error, Malaysian public university, non-academic staff, writing, UniSZA

Introduction

Looking at its widespread use globally, such as in economics, politics, culture, and sports, the English language has a unique function and lineage among the world’s major languages. Without this international language, our world today appears unable to connect and communicate. In a nutshell, this worldwide language has become a lingua franca for the entire world’s population. During the last few years, the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has sparked a lot of discussions. What emerges from most of the debate, though, is that there appears to be a great degree of ambiguity about what ELF is and how it relates to the much more firmly established field of world Englishes (Jenkins, 2009).

English has become an international medium of communication. The mastery of English is deemed as having an edge and can bring a lot of advantages to its speakers. Malaysia has long considered the importance of mastering the English language. The government has planned, and subsequently, implemented many policies to ensure Malaysians master the English language starting from primary schools to tertiary levels of education (Abdullah, 2013). Additionally, the government sectors recognize the value of mastering the English language. Those who work as civil employees in government agencies have a strong desire to master the English language to perform their duties and tasks more efficiently. Universities are one of the government sectors where employees must be fluent in this worldwide language. However, “poor English communication skills have become a major concern in the country” (Hassan, Abdul Rahaman, & Azmi, 2021, p. 378).

As a result, universities that welcome international students must be prepared to meet their every need, both academically and in terms of their well-being throughout their time at the university. Some of the most sought-after criteria that foreign students look out for before deciding to pursue their studies abroad are state-of-the-art facilities, attractive tuition fees, prospective academic programs, future careers after graduation, distinguished professors or lecturers, and a conducive learning environment. Aside from the academic staff who serves as the university's backbone, non-academic personnel plays an essential role in assuring students' well-being and the smooth functioning of their studies in Malaysia.

Officers at the university level are often chosen among staff with bachelor's degrees. These officers are responsible for overseeing the smooth operation of the office, and they are occasionally assigned to attend meetings with other institutions or entities that require them to communicate in English. In this situation, staff with a strong command of the English language will have an advantage over those who are handicapped by the language due to their lack of command of the language.

The problem was initially observed by one of the researchers when teaching an English Intensive Course for non-academic staff at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Malaysia. The researchers, cum an instructor at the time, concluded that the majority of the non-academic officers still committed many grammatical errors in using the English language in their written work. The same opinion was also shared by the other three teachers who taught English in the course. This prompted the researchers to initiate this research to help improve the level of written English among non-academic officers. In this study, the researchers intend to identify the
most common errors committed by non-academic officers at UniSZA in writing the English language.

**Literature Review**

*The Role of English Language to Administrative and Support Staff in Malaysian Public Universities*

Non-academic staff members are professional personnel who make a substantial contribution to a university's performance. They bring a valuable set of professional talents to the university, as well as a wealth of institutional knowledge, vital resources, and a willingness to collaborate with professors and administration in accomplishing the university's vision and goal. The involvement of non-academic employees has a significant influence on the university's student experience and studies.

While faculties assist students in academic matters and research, non-academic employees have an equal role in ensuring students' success by providing vital support and operational services. Non-academic staff personnel assist students with admissions and registration, orientation to the institution, residential life programming, and a variety of non-academic learning activities, as well as helping them prepare for their next professional stage. In addition, staff employees in academic departments or student service units are frequently the first points of contact for a large number of students who require assistance in some way. In short, non-academic staff at each university play a critical role in guaranteeing the institution's seamless administration. As non-academic staff is also expected to meet the need of international students, investigating their English proficiency may serve to offer the general picture envisioned.

**Errors and Mistakes in Learning English as Second Language**

According to behaviorist learning theory, past habits influence how new habits are learned (Ellis, 1998). The grammar imprinted into the mind as the first language will obstruct the easy acquisition of the second language when studying a second language. This interference occurs as a result of proactive inhibition, which occurs when existing learning prevents the acquisition of new behaviors. When students transfer the realization device from their first language to the second, an error is likely to occur in the second language because the learners will transfer the realization device from their first language to the second language.

During the process of learning a foreign language, mistakes and errors “are unavoidable constitutes” (Li, 2021, p. 238). Although the terms “mistakes” and “errors” appear to be interchangeable, they are not the same. A mistake is a type of performance fault in which the learner wrongly uses the language. On the other hand, an error is a structure that deviates from the standard language reflecting the interlanguage ability of the learner (Kirkgoz, 2010).

Lightbown and Spada (2006) asserted that errors in language acquisition and understanding of grammar had become essential factors that signal the growth of the second language (L2) learners' interlanguage system. This view was also quoted by Muftah and Galea (2013). Errors are defined as aspects of learners' utterances that differ in some manner from those
of native speakers, and learners of a target language are unaware of their errors, and hence unable to fix them (Corder, 1981). Error Analysis is the process of encountering, computing, and analyzing these errors. Error Analysis, according to Richards (1984), as cited in Tomlinson (2011), is the study and analysis of errors produced by learners of a second or foreign language.

Even in the first language, writing is a difficult task. Writing in a foreign language is undoubtedly more difficult. As a result, many scholars have attempted to identify the most prevalent writing errors made by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Teachers will be able to better recognize students' difficulties in learning the language if they better understand the errors they make and where they come from in the EFL writing process. It will also assist in implementing appropriate teaching practices to help EFL students learn more effectively (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012).

The notion of mistakes and errors are differentiated, following their processes and implications towards language teaching and learning. Some linguists have come up with various definitions as scholars have different ways of looking at and differentiating the two concepts.

Edge (1994) makes an analogy by giving examples of someone who writes sentences that contain some deviant sentences. In the case that the person could correct the deviant sentences himself after the mistakes were pointed, it is called a “mistake”. It is believed that if the person pays attention to the details, he/she could easily put the deviant sentences right. In this case, if the matter is seen from the angle of a teacher, regardless of what causes the mistakes, if students were able to correct the deviant sentences by themselves, this is called a “mistake”. On the other hand, there is another category for mistakes that individual students could not correct even if they were pointed out. In this case, if students cannot self-correct a mistake in their English, even when the mistakes are pointed out, then the students can be assured of having committed an “error”.

Bartram and Walton (2001) distinguished between “mistake” and “error”. According to them, mistakes occur due to learners’ inability to put what they have learned into practice. On the other hand, Errors happen when learners try out something completely new and get it wrong. Ellis (1998) also distinguished between the two terms. According to him, Errors refer to gaps in learners’ knowledge, and they happen due to learners’ lack of knowledge of correct grammatical forms. On the other hand, Mistakes represent infrequent gaps in performance, and at times, they occur because of learners’ inability to accomplish what they already knew.

From the three definitions and differences given above, it can be summarized that mistakes happen due to carelessness. They know the right forms, but due to some reasons such as memory lapses, physical states such as tiredness, psychological conditions such as strong emotions, or being in a hurry, they commit mistakes. Learners can correct mistakes once the mistakes are spotted. On the other hand, Errors happen due to learners’ lack of knowledge. They seem to consistently make the same mistakes. Learners are unable to correct errors even if the errors are spotted.
Theoretical Approach: Error Analysis

This study is guided by the Error Analysis approach. The tradition of error analysis started a long time ago. In the early 1970s, Error Analysis entailed merely generalized assortments of common errors and their language categorization. At that time, the objectives of traditional Error Analysis were primarily educational, where information obtained from errors might be utilized to structure learning tools or to conduct instructions (Ellis, 1998). The nonexistence of theoretical background to conceptualize the contribution of errors to language acquisition resulted in the absence of any serious effort to explain or theorize errors from psychological perspectives. However, Corder (1974) published several articles that invigorated the importance of Error Analysis. Additionally, Corder employed a process of Error Analysis as follows.

a) First, a corpus of language is carefully chosen. This stage entails determining the sample size, the sampling medium as well as the sample’s homogeneity which includes the age groups and first language of learners.

b) Then, errors in the corpus language are identified. At this stage, lapses (such as deviant sentences that occurred due to processing difficulties other than lack of proficiency) are distinguished from errors. For instance, some sentences could be “overtly idiosyncratic” (ill-constructed in terms of rules of the target language) or “covertly idiosyncratic” (superficially well-constructed but ungrammatical in terms of their context of use).

c) Next, errors are categorized. This stage consists of assigning each error with particular grammatical descriptions.

d) Afterward, errors are explained in detail, where attempts are made to ascertain the psycholinguistic root causes of the errors made.

e) Finally, errors are assessed and evaluated. At this point, the significance or seriousness of each error is assessed to make principled pedagogical decisions. The error assessments are needed only when the intention of the analysis is pedagogical.

In essence, the most substantial influence of Error Analysis in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) lies in its advancement of the concept of errors to conceptualize the language pedagogic process (Ellis, 1998). Owing to the conceptualization of Error Analysis concerning interlanguage practices, errors are no longer viewed as “undesirable or unwanted forms”, but as a signal of learners’ active participation in contributing to SLA.

Errors usually happen due to learners’ lack of knowledge, and they usually occur continuously. The errors tend to occur in many aspects of grammar (Mashoor & Abdullah, 2020). Error Analysis tries to shed light on this phenomenon to transform the phenomenon of errors from something that is feared or avoided to something significant pedagogically. Thus, this effort could help both teachers and students in the process of teaching and learning, whereby the students’ errors are identified, classified, explained, and finally evaluated. Upon completion of this process, it is hoped that errors committed by the students will be a catalyst for the teachers to rectify the weaknesses of their students and employ certain remedial efforts to help the students master the language more effectively.

Past Studies
Past Study on the Use of English Language among Non-Academic Staff

There was a study by Mahadi, Ambigapahty, and Kaur (2019) on the role of the English language in two public universities in Malaysia involving administrative and support staff. The study looked at how the non-academic staff is equipped linguistically to meet the challenges of globalization. Altogether, 326 respondents from two public universities were involved in the study. The first finding revealed that only an insignificant number of the respondents mentioned that they regularly attended to letters and inquiries in English. Moreover, more than a third of the respondents never or rarely address such inquiries. However, these statistics have not specified whether the respondents were initially assigned with such responsibilities. Perhaps, they never obtained written inquiries, particularly in English, because their professional tasks do not primarily involve handling inquiries.

The research outcome also indicated that about 20% of the respondents mentioned that they always or frequently communicate in English at the workplace. Also, most of them responded negatively; they seldom or never used English to communicate at the workplace. The findings also showed that only 12% of the respondents mentioned that notifications sent to them were frequently produced in English. Additionally, about 20% of them mentioned that they frequently or always received information in English from the heads of their departments. The rest of the respondents stated that they were seldom or never given instructions in English.

Past Studies on Errors in Writing the English language

Research shows that “writing proficiency is considered more complex and challenging than other language skills” (Hassan et al., 2021, p. 378). As such, some studies focused specifically on writing issues among English language learners, including English writing errors. For instance, Kirkgoz (2010) analyzed written errors of Turkish adult learners of English. The study identified four types of errors committed by the learners, namely: Grammatical interference of pluralization (Examples: There are two telephones on the table, We have a big garden and three dogs), Verb-tense (Examples: My family is living in Malaysia, they are loving their children), Prepositional interference (Examples: I am going home, He is watching to TV), and Lexical interference (Examples: Bilge is a large garden (should be “has”), He is some fat (no “some”)).

Another study was carried out by Muftah and Galea (2013) on error analysis of present simple tense in the interlanguage of adult Arab English language learners. The study revealed that the respondents committed two most common errors, which were: omission of the third person singular agreement morpheme s (Examples: He complained that I am too slow, Tam speak English very well) and the suffixation of –ing (Example: Every time Tam says a new word, Liam trying to repeat it).

Additionally, Özkayran and Yilmaz (2020) examined English writing errors among university students in Turkey. According to the study, a total of 381 errors were committed by the students, including misformation errors, omission errors, and misordering errors. The findings revealed that misformation errors were common among the students. The study recommends that English language teachers “should focus more on prepositions, verb "to be", spelling, articles, singular/plural forms of nouns, word formation, tenses, word choice and
subject-verb agreement, which were the most problematic areas of language” (p. 48). Also, Li (2021) found that misuse of tenses and articles are the most common errors committed by English learners. These errors, according to the study, are primarily due to some factors such as “thought patterns and lack of knowledge” (p. 240).

Previous studies on English writing errors focused on students’ errors at different educational levels, especially higher institutions and universities (Muftah & Galea, 2013; Özkayran & Yilmaz, 2020). To the best of our knowledge, none of the previous studies focused on English writing errors among non-academic staff, particularly in public universities. Thus, we investigate English writing errors committed by non-academic staff at UniSZA, a public university on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

**Methodology**
This research employed a qualitative approach in which Error Analysis was conducted, where every respondent was required to write a paragraph in the English language in about 150-200 words on the topic *My greatest challenge as a UniSZA officer*. The total number of non-academic staff from grades 41-54 during the data collection was 197. By referring to the Krejcie and Morgan table (1970), with a population of 197 staff, the researchers selected a sample of 132 non-academic officers for this research, comprising those holding grades 41-54 and working either in faculties, institutes, and other departments at the selected university.

To answer the research question: What are common errors in writing English among non-academic officers from grades 41 to 54 at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin? The researchers employed Error Analysis procedures and analyzed the respondents’ written works from the English linguistic point of view, especially from the structural and grammatical aspects.

**Findings and Discussion**

**Demographic Background of the Respondents**
Altogether, 150 questionnaires were administered to administrative staff at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), a public university on the east coast of the country, where the last part of the questionnaire asked the respondents to write a paragraph to analyze of their writing work. Out of 150 copies of distributed questionnaires, only 139 were duly returned. There was nearly equal number of female and male respondents with age groups ranging from 24-59 (an average age of 30.1 years). With regard to the respondents’ years of service at UniSZA, most of them (44%) have served the university for 6-10 years. Figure 1 shows the respondents’ demographic information.
Common Errors in Writing the English Language among Non-Academic Staff from Grade 41 to 54 at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin

To answer this research question, the respondents were asked to write an essay on a topic related to their work titled “My greatest challenge as a UniSZA officer’. This was to ensure that they would be able to express themselves freely in writing an essay topic they were familiar with. After analyzing their essays, it was found that the respondents produced numerous types of errors on the following items:

Errors in the usage of verbs

Our findings show that the respondents do not adhere to the rules of subject-verb agreement and *Be+Verb Stem for Verb Stem*. Examples of the errors and their corrections are listed as follows.

Table 1. Errors in the usage of verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English become something that I feel not comfortable</td>
<td>English becomes something that I feel not comfortable with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Usually, this task need to be completed in a short period of time</td>
<td>Usually, this task needs to be completed in a short period of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To be a good science officer both knowledge are needed.</td>
<td>To be a good science officer both knowledge is needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>That payment are paid early.</td>
<td>That payment is paid early.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. *Be+Verb Stem for Verb Stem*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Same situation was happened when I was at faculty.</td>
<td>Same situation happened when I was at faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I was started my carrier in Kusza in 1999.</td>
<td>I started my carrier in Kusza in 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I’m start working at UniSZA in 2005.</td>
<td>I started working at UniSZA in 2005.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are two most common errors related to the usage of verbs in the English language. Firstly, it deals with subject-verb agreement errors, and secondly, it deals with the use of *Be+Verb Stem for Verb Stem*. These types of errors are very common among the respondents. The subject-verb agreement rule in English grammar stipulates that a singular subject must always be followed by a singular verb. A singular verb is usually indicated by the use of *-s* or *-es* after the base verb. Likewise, a plural subject takes a plural verb. A plural subject in English is indicated by the use of the base verb without the addition of derivative *-s* or *-es*. On the other hand, errors related to *Be+Verb Stem for Verb Stem* are also common among the respondents.

**Subject-Verb agreement errors**

As shown in the above examples, the respondents did not add *-s* to make the verb singular to conform with the singular noun subject. The respondents did not add *-s* or *-es* to the verb. Most of the errors are found when dealing with singular subjects. One possible explanation is that the respondents were unaware of the grammatical rule that if the subject is singular, the verb must be singular, thus omitting *-s* or *-es*. Another possible explanation is that the respondents might have been confused with the different usage of *-s* or *-es* in nouns and verbs. In English, the plural subject is created by adding *-s* or *-es* to the noun but for verbs, only singular verbs add *-s* or *-es* to the base verb. A third possible explanation is that the respondents could not comprehend the concept of subject-verb agreement as it is non-existent in the Malay language.

In all the above examples, the respondents did not apply the proper subject-verb agreement formation. All the subjects in those sentences are singular but the plural verb is used instead. This is an indication the respondents have no grasp of the concept of the English language subject-verb agreement.

**Be+Verb Stem for Verb Stem**

This is another common type of error made by the respondents. In this type of error, the respondents failed to apply the correct form of the past tense in their sentences.

All the above errors suggest that the respondents did not adhere to the simple use of either present or past tense. In all of those sentences, the respondents used the *be* + verb formation, thereby adding the auxiliary verb *was* or *am* preceding the verb when it was not needed. All the above sentences only required a simple present or simple past tense formation. This suggests that their understanding of the simple tense concept is flawed as they were unable to produce the correct form.

**Errors in choosing proper words in the English language**

The research findings show that the respondents have committed to making some errors concerning the use of part of speech, plurality, and comparison of adjectives. Examples of the errors and their corrections are listed as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 : Errors in choosing proper words in the English language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Errors in using proper part of speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Investigation into Common Errors in English Writing
Abdullah, Azmi, Hassan, Atek & Jusoh

2. Errors in using plurality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I have to check their problem and understand their cultural.</td>
<td>I have to check their problem and understand their culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Right now, we feel a little bit comfort compared to 2 previous years.</td>
<td>Right now, we feel a little bit comfortable compared to 2 previous years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I found out majority of UniSZA staff are more dependence on IT staff.</td>
<td>I found out the majority of UniSZA staff are more dependent on IT staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Errors in making comparison of adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I hope my English is more better.</td>
<td>I hope my English is better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>They are a lot of senior staff which work more longer than me.</td>
<td>They are a lot of senior staff who work longer than me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Errors in using proper part of speech

This type of error indicates the inability of the respondents to produce the right choice of words in their writing. As shown by the examples above, some of our respondents did not choose the right vocabulary in their essay writing. These errors can be attributed to them not being able to distinguish a noun from an adjective, hence the mix-up. For example, in sentence 1, the noun culture should have been used instead of the adjective cultural. In sentence 2, it is the opposite, the noun comfort was chosen instead of the correct adjective form of comfortable. Likewise, sentence 3 exhibits their application of the wrong words in the sentence owing to their inability to differentiate the word forms.

Errors in using the plurality

This is one of the most common errors produced by the respondents in their writing. Our findings above show that the respondents retained the singular form of the noun for plurality as indicated in examples 1 and 2. In example 3, the countable noun staff is used to indicate both singular and plural. It is possible that in this context, some of the respondents assumed all countable nouns are formed by adding -s or -es. In many instances, this is true but some English nouns do make exceptions to this rule.

Errors in making the comparison of adjectives

This research also found that our respondents produced errors in the use of comparison of adjectives. A comparison of an adjective is an adjective used to compare two individuals or objects. In English, a comparison is shown mainly by adding -er to the adjective. In less common formation, the word more is used to indicate comparison. In both sentences shown above, the respondents committed errors in their use of comparison of adjectives. The respondents used both
-er and more when making the comparison. This is unacceptable in English as the norm is to add –er to the adjectives.

**Errors in using passive voice and article**

Our findings also show that the respondents do not adhere to the rules of passive voice and in the use of the proper article as shown in the examples below.

Table 3: *Errors in using passive voice and article*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PTD and PTN <em>can be appoint</em> as a head of department or division.</td>
<td>PTD and PTN <em>can be appointed</em> as a head of department or division.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>UniSZA is one of the public university which is control by the ministry of higher education (MOHE).</td>
<td>UniSZA is one of the public universities which is controlled by the ministry of higher education (MOHE).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assistant registrar normally not given the opportunity to give their views or opinions.</td>
<td>Assistant registrar normally <em>is not given</em> the opportunity to give their views or opinions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Errors in using passive voice**

This is another type of error commonly found in the respondents’ writing. The respondents were found to have formed the passive voice incorrectly. Examples 1 and 2 show that the respondents did not apply the correct formation of *be* + past participle of the verb to construct a grammatically correct passive sentence. In the two sentences, the verb following *be* was not changed to the past participle form. In example 3, the application of the passive voice is flawed because the *be* verb preceding the past participle form of the verb is omitted.

**Errors in using the article**

In this type of error, there is either an omission of an article in the sentence or an incorrect article is chosen. This refers to the use of *a, an, the*, or none at all. Example 1 shows the omission of the article *the* in the sentence. On the other hand, example 2 shows the incorrect use of an article where the article *a* is used instead of *an*. Example no. 3 also shows the omission of the article *the* from the sentence thus making the sentence grammatically incorrect.

**Other common errors**

There are some other common errors committed by the respondents in the research in relation to the omission of verb *to be*, omission of words, tense sequence, word ordering, and the use of gerund. Although these errors were not found excessive, they still need to be addressed to ensure
that their writing English language will be better in the future to meet grammatically correct English grammar. Some of the errors concerning these errors are listed below.

Table 4. Other common errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Culture of work at UniSZA also challenging to me.</td>
<td>The culture of work at UniSZA is also challenging to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It difficult to contact other PTJ representative after office hour.</td>
<td>It is difficult to contact other PTJ representatives after office hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I __ very happy and like the situation.</td>
<td>I am very happy and like the situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Omission of words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am afraid ___ speak in front of people.</td>
<td>I am afraid to speak in front of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Besides, I also need ___ prepare myself to serve the faculty how to prepare documentation.</td>
<td>Besides, I also need to prepare myself to serve the faculty how to prepare documentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The development ___ the university</td>
<td>The development of the university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The position ___ head of department …</td>
<td>The position as head of the department …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Tense sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>You also need to cover and supervised your support staff.</td>
<td>You also need to cover and supervise your support staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I can understand people speaking English but I was nervous to talk especially in the ‘group.</td>
<td>I can understand people speaking English but I am nervous to talk especially in the group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Word ordering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The most challenge that you need to take is how can you balance the needs from academicians and support’s staff.</td>
<td>The most challenge that you need to take is how you can balance the needs of academicians and support staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If we are to achieve all citizens equally UniSZA uses language English always.</td>
<td>If we are to achieve all citizens equally UniSZA uses the English language always.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. The use of gerund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Corrections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am very nervous because it is a first time I have to be a chairman in speak English.</td>
<td>I am very nervous because it is the first time I have to be a chairman in speaking English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some people did not understand and put the blame on me for not completed the task on time.</td>
<td>Some people did not understand and put the blame on me for not completing the task on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>He had a vision of privatize UniSZA’s clinic.</td>
<td>He had a vision of privatizing UniSZA’s clinic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Omission of verb to be**

Our finding shows that some respondents are prone to omitting the be verb *to be* when forming sentences. *Be* verbs consist of *am, is, are, was, were*. They are either used independently as non-action verbs in sentences or as auxiliary verbs in tenses. From our analysis, sentence 1 is missing...
the auxiliary verb *is*. Sentences 2 and 3 are missing the non-action verb of *is* and *am* respectively. In English, the use of *be* verb is fundamental in making the sentences grammatical. In contrast, in Malay, there is no equivalent form for non-action verbs. The use of the non-action verb is non-existent in Malay. Malay also does not make use of the *be* verb as auxiliaries in tenses.

**Omission of words**
This type of error refers to the sentence missing a word which renders the sentence ungrammatical. As shown above, the sentences are grammatically incorrect because they are missing a word. The omitted word in the above examples is either the *to* infinitive or a preposition. In sentences 1 and 2, the *to* infinitive is missing. In sentences 4 and 5, the preposition is missing in each of those sentences.

**Tense sequence**
The findings also found that some respondents used the wrong tense sequence. This is a mixing of tenses where the past tense is mixed with the present tense when only a single tense form is appropriate. In both examples 1 and 2 above, the respondents used the past tense form instead of the present tense. This indicates the inability of the respondents to apply the correct tense form in their sentences. This could be attributed to their unfamiliarity with the present time or past time concept.

**Word ordering**
This type of error suggests that the respondents are unable to understand word order in English sentence structure. The above examples show that the word order is incorrect. In sentence 1, the respondent probably thought that it is a question, therefore wrote *... how can you ....* In sentence 2, the English word order in the noun phrase is not adhered to. In the English language, the adjective precedes the noun in the noun phrase. However, the respondent did not conform to the English word order. Most likely the word order in his or her noun phrase formation was partly influenced by the Malay language which stipulates that a noun always precedes an adjective.

**The use of gerund**
Some respondents are also prone to making errors in the use of gerunds. In English, gerund refers to the use of the present participle form of the verb (*verb*+*ing*) after a preposition. In the three examples above, the respondents disregarded the use of gerund following the use of prepositions *in* (sentence 1), *for* (sentence 2), and *of* (sentence 3). This signifies the respondents’ unfamiliarity with the rules of gerund use.

The findings reported in this study revealed that non-academic staff at the selected university committed different types of errors. Nevertheless, most of these errors are basic and preventable. This outcome implies that either the respondents do not care much about English grammar and rules or they are of the view that English is neither important nor necessary for survival in their daily work. Moreover, some of the errors identified in this study, specifically omission errors, plurality errors, and verb-tense errors, are very similar to those pointed out in previous studies (Kirkgoz,
2010; Muftah & Galea, 2013). Also, English language teachers were advised to focus on these types of writing errors to help learners develop competency in writing the English language (Özkayran & Yilmaz, 2020).

**Conclusion**

This study explored the common errors made by non-academic staff of a public university in Malaysia. From the findings, two major conclusions are drawn. First, most of the non-academic officers, from Grade 41-54, do not command a high standard of English, judging from the errors they produced in their essay writing. This issue does not augur well for the university. As officers holding important and respectable positions, coupled with degree qualifications, they are expected to command better English. Second, the officers have not fully grasped the structures and grammatical rules of the English language, but most of the errors they committed are basic and preventable. Some types of errors are very common and keep recurring in their writing.

Therefore, this study offers some recommendations to help reduce errors in writing the English language. For example, writing courses need to be conducted for these university officers. This effort will help the officers to develop English writing proficiency and enable them to produce quality writing. The writing courses should incorporate English rules and grammar. Additionally, different methods of writing instructions could be developed. Examples of such methods include Peer correction, Underlined and Coded mistakes, Search and Correct technique, Underlining mistakes, as well as Self-Correction without indicating mistakes. Nevertheless, instructors may develop their own realistic instructional tools. This study is limited to English writing errors, and thus, further research may focus on other language skills such as speaking and listening.

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Project Work in Moroccan EFL Classroom: between the Official Guidelines’ Recommendation and the Challenges of Implementation

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Received: 8/10/2021     Accepted: 10/18/2021     Published:12/15/2021

Abstract
Project work is used in several educational settings, including foreign and second language teaching contexts. In the Moroccan English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, the Moroccan Ministry of Education recommended implementing project work, and it is a common component of the Moroccan textbooks of English. Yet, there is a scarcity of studies conducted on the use of project work in Moroccan EFL classrooms. The main aim of the study is to investigate students’ and teachers’ attitudes towards project work. The study addresses the question about students’ and teachers' attitudes towards project work and the factors behind those attitudes. It was conducted with sixty students and eight teachers belonging to two different high schools (Moulay Rachid and Abbas Sebti high schools) in Tangier. To collect data, the researcher made use of two data collection methods, namely the questionnaire and the interview. The results of the study showed that both students and teachers had positive attitudes towards project work. The results also revealed that not all teachers follow the steps of using project work. Based on the results, it was clear that the lack of technology is one of the most severe challenges that hamper the use of project work. The findings of this study could form the basis for further research and contribute to improving the learning and teaching situation in Moroccan high schools.

Keywords: challenges of project work, Moroccan EFL classroom, project work, teachers’ and students’ attitudes

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.30
Introduction

Based on the fact that learners gain knowledge or skills by experiencing and solving real-world problems, Project work is acknowledged to be effective and impactful in 21st-century education (Pham, 2018). It allows active involvement of students (Stoller, 2006) as it represents a transition from traditional teaching methods to student-centered education. As an essential component of task-based learning, which is probably the most widely adopted model of integrated language teaching (Sierra & Ayala, 2019), project work is an effective way to integrate the four skills.

In the Moroccan EFL classroom, the Moroccan Ministry of Education recommended implementing project work (MEN, 2007). Project work is a common component of the Moroccan textbooks of English. After every two units, students work with their classmates on a project (Ticket to English, Gateway to English). However, it has been noticed that only a few teachers implement project work in their classrooms (this has been noticed based on my experience as a student and now as a public high school teacher of English for more than six years). Significantly, the present study is an unprecedented attempt to investigate this issue as no previous studies investigated the issue of project work in Moroccan EFL classrooms. The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the attitudes of both students and teachers towards the use of project work in English classes?
- What are the factors that may hinder teachers’ implementation of project work in teaching?

In the Moroccan EFL context, the present study is an unprecedented attempt to investigate the attitudes of students and teachers towards project work. The study also aims at investigating the reasons behind the lack of use of project work in Moroccan EFL classrooms despite the Ministry’s official guidelines recommendations.

Literature review

Defining project work:

Project work refers to a work that focuses on completing a task that involves a lot of resources, people and materials, and through which learners practice a range of skills and language systems (British Council, 2019). According to Stoller (2006), projects are content-based activities in which learners are expected to do something with language. They are multi-skill activities addressing topics or themes rather than specific language elements. Fried-Booth (2002) suggests that “projects are driven by the need to create an end-product” (p. 1). Such products can be an oral or written report, a poster, a handbook, a file, or a technology-based presentation.

Coming out with a product is an essential element in PW. Yet, the route to achieving this product is worthwhile, not the product itself (Fried-Booth, 2002). Learners in their journey of attaining an end-product can improve many aspects of their abilities and competencies. When working on projects, students “not only perform tasks they can cope with but also learn to work in a team, where it is important to listen to partners, agree or disagree with them, give arguments to support one’s opinion” (Ludmila et al. 2015, p 177). Students may develop their language and research skills, critical thinking, creativity, autonomy, confidence, and collaboration skills. This
leads us to claim that projects are both process and end-oriented (Stoller, 1997). Haines, (Year) refers to project work as “an approach to learning which complements mainstream methods and which can be used with almost all levels, ages and abilities of students” (as Cited in Carrol & McCulloh, 2018, p. 108). Its main features are versatility and adaptability, and they account for the numerous types of projects identified by English language methodologists.

While reviewing the definition of PW, it’s noticeable that other authors have defined PW with different voices. Given the variety of definitions, the present study adopts Katz’s and Chard’s definition (1992). They defined project work as “an extended study of a topic usually undertaken by a group of children, sometimes by a whole class, and occasionally by an individual child” (p, 4). Here, it’s important to mention that Chard and Katz have perceived PW as a whole approach to teaching children, whereas in the present study PW is not as seen as an alternative to other teaching methods but a complementary element to mainstream methods of teaching different age groups.

**Types of project work**

A variety of types of project work are discussed in the literature. Projects could be classified into different types according to the degree of structure, the data collection techniques, sources of information, and the way through which information is reported.

The first main categorizing criterion of projects is the degree of structure in them. In this category, projects are divided into three main types. These are structured, semi-structured, and unstructured projects. Ke (2010) stated that structured projects are “determined, specified, and organized by the teacher in terms of topic, material, methodology, and production” (p.101). According to Stoller (2006), “details in semi-structured projects are determined in part by the teacher and in part by the learner” (p.21). In unstructured projects, students are independent in defining the directions and goals of the project (Stoller, 2006).

The second criterion is related to type of data collection techniques and sources of information. These include research projects, text projects, correspondence projects, survey projects, and encounter projects (Stoller, 2006). Research projects require the gathering of information through library research. Text projects are carried out by encountering with “texts” (e.g., literature, reports, news media, video and audio material, or computer-based data). As for correspondence projects, they necessitate communication with people to collect information using letters, faxes, phone calls, etc. Survey projects refers to the creation of a survey instrument, collecting and analyzing data from informants. Encounter projects result in face-to-face contact with guest speakers or individuals outside the classroom to collect the data.

Projects also differ in how information is reported. Stoller (2006) identified three types, namely production projects, performance projects, and organizational projects. Production projects are associated with the creation of bulletin board displays, letters, radio programs, poster sessions, written reports, photo essays, letters, handbooks, brochures, banquet menus, travel itineraries, and so forth. Performance projects could be staged debates, oral presentations, theatrical performances, or fashion shows. Organizational projects involve the planning and formation of a club, conversation table, or conversation partner program.
In sum, Project work appears to be compatible with all learning styles, and it caters to students’ differences. It provides students with different resources for the data collection and tools for presenting their final products. In this way, students could use resources and tools that are “appropriate to their levels and compatible with their technology knowledge” (Bell, 2010, p. 42).

**Project work and Second/Foreign Language Learning**

Project work was introduced into the field of English language teaching as a reflection of the principles of student-centered teaching (Beckett and Slater, 2005). The term project in the EFL context was first introduced by Freid-Booth (1986). In the EFL context, PW is believed to improve language skills. For example, Tassema (2005) contended that a classroom project is an excellent way to stimulate students’ motivation to write because it offers the opportunity to match tasks with exciting topics that are relevant to the students. McCarthy (2010) reported that project work could be used as an effective tool to develop students’ public speaking since students often present their products orally in front of the whole class. More interestingly, Fragoulis (2009) conducted a study on the implementation of the project in EFL in Greek primary schools (case study), and reported that “Most cognitive, emotional and psychomotor aims of project work were achieved by the majority of students… most students showed an improvement in all four language skills. Their speaking and listening skills, in particular, had the greatest improvement” (p.116). Fried-Booth (2002) claimed that project work is expected to give opportunities for learners to practice the language as they interact with each other using the target language.

In the literature, however, there exist evident discrepancies between general education students and teachers’ evaluations of project work and English as second language (ESL) teachers’ and students’ evaluations of project work (Beckett,2002). General education students’ and teachers perceptions indicate that PW creates opportunities for in-depth learning and fosters student independence and problem-solving skills ( Hadim & Esche, 2002; Eklöf, 2014; Levine, 2004), whereas English as Second Language students’ and teachers’ evaluations of project work show that it is mainly associated with providing opportunities of comprehensible input and integrated language teaching. For example, McCarthy (2010) conducted teacher-initiated classroom research (action research) to see the extent to which PW can promote students’ autonomy. The findings indicated that many students were not enthusiastic about exercising autonomy and were willing to work at only minimal level for the class credit, “they were generally unsure about their ability to be autonomous and after being introduced to project-based learning, a learning style completely foreign to them, they seemed even more uncertain” (p.231). Similarly, Beckett (2002) reported that “students felt that project work prevented them from learning from the teacher and textbooks and from focusing on language skills” (p. 52). Beckett also reported that teachers felt a lack of student respect and noted a drop in student attendance.

In sum, research in general education showed that project work fosters management and analytical skills. Evidence supporting this claim in Second language settings has not been clearly supported. PW in the EFL context, on the other hand, is primarily associated with providing opportunities for integrated language teaching.
**Project work and students’ attitudes towards learning:**

Different studies have found out that students’ attitude plays a significant role in the learning of foreign language. Students holding a “positive attitude are academically far more successful than students with a negative attitude” (Gardner, 1985 cited in Yavuz & Duman, 2018, p 190). However, several studies have dealt with the effects of project work on students’ attitudes. Bas (2011) carried out a study investigating the impacts of project work on students’ attitudes towards the English course and students’ academic achievement of 9th-grade students in Turkey. Bas made use of the pre-test/ post-test control group research. In terms of the attitude scale towards the English course, there was a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. Students who were instructed by PW showed more positive attitudes towards the English lesson. These findings were confirmed by Wanchid & Wattanasin (2015) in their investigation of the attitudes of students of Mongkut’s University of Technology towards project work. The researchers stated that project work made students “feel more confident and relaxed, that project work made English more interesting, improved their computer skills and the four English skills” (p.586). In a different context, Koparan and Güven’s (2014) findings are also compatible with the previous stated findings. These authors reported that was a significant difference between the experimental and the control groups, “the students who were educated by project-based learning had more positive attitudes towards statistics than those who were educated by the instruction based on student textbooks” (p.82).

**Method**

**Setting and participants:**

This study took place at two different high schools in Tangier, Morocco, during the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year. The population of this study is students and teachers of English in Moulay Rachid and Abbas Sebti high schools. The sample of the study consists of 30 students from each high school and eight English teachers. The study group belongs to two different classroom levels, first Baccalaureate, and second Baccalaureate literary stream students. This population was chosen since it represents the category that has studied English in Moroccan public schools for more than two years. Random sampling is used to choose a representative sample of those students. This sampling technique was chosen because it is more objective, and it gives a chance to everyone to participate in the study.

**Instruments**

Given the purposes stated above, data were collected through the use of two main instruments: the questionnaire and the interview (semi-structured interview). Thus, the study is of a quantitative and qualitative nature.

**The questionnaire**

The researcher opted for the questionnaire for a number of reasons. First, questionnaires can be administered to large groups in different locations. In this way, much time and energy could be saved. Second, questionnaires offer the possibility of anonymity which few data collection methods can offer. This is very important because the absence of the researcher may encourage participants to respond to all questions, even the sensitive ones. Third, data obtained from the questionnaire are more standard and uniform since all respondents are provided with the same questions.
The students’ questionnaire consisted of nine closed-ended questions. Multiple choice questions and yes-no questions were the dominant questions in the questionnaire. The study used Likert scales to determine the extent to which students agree or disagree with the given statements. Teachers were also given questionnaires to fill in. The questionnaire included a variety of items such as Likert scales, multiple-choice questions, yes-no questions, and open-ended questions.

The interview protocol

As for the semi-structured interview, it was used for three main reasons. The first reason was to triangulate data obtained from the questionnaire. Second, semi-structured interviews are personalized and therefore permit in-depth information, free response, and flexibility that could not be obtained using other data collection procedures. Third, in second language acquisition, interviews are the frequently used method to collect data about covert variables such as attitudes and perceptions.

Research Procedures

Data Collection Procedures

The data of the questionnaire were collected during the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year. In the first week of April, questionnaires were administered to the teachers and the students. Students and teachers were asked to answer the given questions and identify the extent to which they agree or disagree with particular items.

Before distributing the questionnaires to students, permission was taken from their teachers and the high school staff. With the collaboration of teachers, the purpose of the study, the time limit and method of their valuable responses were explained to students. Clarifications and explanations were provided when needed. In the second week of the same month, three teachers were purposefully selected for an interview. The purpose of the interview was to gain in-depth information about how exactly teachers perceive the use of project work in their teaching and the obstacles they face when they implement it.

Data analysis procedures

The interview data were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis. These data from the interview responses were used to support the results of the questionnaire data, and to find out the types of obstacles that hinder teachers’ use of project work.

The quantitative data of the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS version 18.0). Thus, the analysis of the quantitative data included some statistical techniques such as chi-square and frequency.

Results

This section reports the results of the study. It gives details about the two separate questionnaires that involved sixty students (60) and eight teachers, and the interview which was conducted with three teachers.
Presentation of students’ questionnaires

Figure 1. The Importance of project work

Figure one shows that majority of students (72%) stated that project work is important. Figure two reveals the reasons behind that.

Figure 2. Reasons for preferring project work

When asked to give their reasons for preferring project work, a great number of students (37 0%) stated that they want to “improve their oral skills” and they enjoy working in projects. 19% of them reported that they want to get good marks whereas few students want to get appraisal from the teacher.
Table 1. *project work and language skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language skills</th>
<th>N° of students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking and reading</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening and writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above-stated results show that the majority of students believe that project work is important for speaking skills (38%). This can be explained by the fact that students are required to present their projects orally, for example, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. Some stated that it is important for all their language skills.

**Presentation of Teachers’ Questionnaires and Interviews**

*Figure 3: The importance of project work*

Figure three reveals that 25% of teachers stated that project work fosters students’ language skills. 12.5% of teachers see that it increases their motivation to learn. Thirty-seven percent of teachers declared that project work increases both students’ motivation to learn and their attitudes towards learning. While 25% of them believed that it fosters students’ language skills, attitudes and motivation.

When asked to state if they use project work and for what reasons, all interviewees agreed that they use project work. They stated a variety of reasons for such use. For example, respondent one said: “Yes, project work gives the opportunity to shy, weak, and slow students to develop their autonomy. I use it also to evaluate my students’ competence. Tests are not enough to test students…”
Others claimed that project work can be used as an effective tool to facilitate learning for students, for example, teacher two said, “Yes, I use project work to motivate students and facilitate learning for them. Many students are scared to speak in English. Project work helps these students to develop their personality and helps them to go beyond the classroom” she added” Another reason why I use project work is that it involves the four language skills”. Teachers’ three answer is approximately similar to teacher two. She responded to the question as follows: “In my point of view, project work helps students to be autonomous, more motivated, and acquire a number of skills such as critical thinking, research skills, and of course language skills.”

Table 2. challenges of project work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-related factors</th>
<th>School-related factors</th>
<th>External factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ linguistic competence</td>
<td>-lack of technology.</td>
<td>-Time constrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Lack of desire.</td>
<td>-lack of enough books and magazines in the school library.</td>
<td>-Number of student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Students’ social status.</td>
<td></td>
<td>s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two gives a summary about teachers’ views about the possible challenges that hinder the implementation of project work. The data obtained from the interviews is categorized into the three main categories. To support this, teacher one said: “Some students belong to poor families; they do not have access to technology…. Some students are not interested…They do not show a desire to make efforts”. In addition to the lack of technology access, teacher two stated that time constraints, the number of students, students’ linguistic competence, and the necessity to follow the textbook are obstacles that hinder the use of project work. She said: “There are many obstacles. For example, time constraints, the number of students, and the linguistic competence of students. Also, we have to follow the textbook. School conditions are also a real challenge. There is no internet access… Libraries should be equipped with computers”.

Discussion

The results of the study show that both teachers and students hold a positive attitude towards the use project work. They both think that is a good way to teach/ learn English. For the majority of students, project work is important for speaking skills. In this context, Stoller (2006) stated that all language skills are involved. For example, to collect data, students should make
use of a variety of resources. They may read books and magazines. Also, they may conduct interviews with native speakers. To do that, students should be good listeners and good speakers. As stated earlier, students are required to present their products orally in front of the audience. Furthermore, the findings of the study are compatible with some other works that are previously mentioned in the review of the literature. For instance, Bas (2011)’s research carried out a study investigating the effects of project work on students’ attitudes towards the English course and students’ academic achievement of ninth-grade students in Turkey reveals that “PBL creates a positive and significant difference in both academic success and attitude” (Yavuz & Duman, 2018. P190).

The findings of the study also demonstrate that the majority of students perceive project work as important. This contradicts the findings of Becket’s study (2002) that not all students in the EFL context prefer to work on projects. A considerable number of the respondents also stated that they use project as a way to motivate their students and foster their autonomy, unlike the case of McCarthy (2010), who conducted a teacher-initiated classroom research (action research) to see the extent to which PW can promote students’ autonomy. Her findings indicated that many students were not enthusiastic about exercising autonomy and were willing to work at a minimal level for the class credit.

The findings of the study also state that there are a number of obstacles that hinder the use of project work. The low-linguistic competence of students, the time-consuming nature of project work, among others, are the most serious obstacles that hinder its use in the classroom. This can be substantiated by Krajcik et al. (1998), on their investigation of a project-based science; the authors stated that in-depth investigation of projects took longer time than expected and thus are time-consuming.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate students’ and teachers’ attitudes towards project work in Moroccan EFL classrooms. Based on the findings of the study, some conclusions and recommendations can be derived. First, Teachers can use project work for a number of purposes. It has been proven to give students opportunities to develop their language skills as well as social skills. Project work can be also used to motivate students to learn. Second, the implementation of project work can be very challenging for teachers. Lack of technology, the low-linguistic competence of students, the time-consuming nature of project work, among others, are the most serious obstacles that hinder its use in the classroom. Teachers also lack any training in using project work. Therefore, it is recommended that they attend workshops and training sessions. Last, the findings of the study could form the basis for further research. Here, experimental research can be used to investigate the effects of project work for various subject areas in the Moroccan context.

**Limitations of the study**

This study is not without its limitations. The small size of participants and the very limited number of high schools investigated could affect the degree to which generalizations can be made. In addition, due to Covid-19’s spread, the researcher couldn’t include some observational techniques. Observing what goes on the classroom while using project work will give detailed account of how students interact and practice their roles within project work pedagogy.
About the author
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References


Appendices

**Appendix A**

**Interview with Teachers**

1-Do you use project work in your teaching? Why/ why not? If yes, what benefits project work offer to your students?

2-How do usually your students respond to project work activities?

3-According to you, what are the obstacles that may hinder the use of project work in teaching English?

**Appendix B:**

**Students Questionnaire**

You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire; the purpose is to identify students’ perceptions of the use of project work in English. Please, read each question carefully and respond, as accurately and candidly as you can. Your participation is completely voluntary and will not influence your school grades.
SECTION I: Demographic information

1) Gender: Male: □ Female: □
2) Age: ....
3) Level of education:
   a) Common core □
   b) First year baccalaureate □
   c) Second year baccalaureate □
4) The name of the institution ........................................

5) Have you ever had a project work in class?
   Yes □
   No □
If yes, how many projects have you been involved in this year? ............

SECTION II:
Please tick as appropriate

1) Do you enjoy the English course?
   Yes □
   No □
If yes, which of these activities do you enjoy the most?
   □ Team-based research projects.
   □ Playful activities
   □ Learning independently by reading.
   □ Learning through listening to teacher’ lectures.
   □ Learning by hands-on experiences (learning by doing).
2) Does project work make you more motivated to participate in the English course activities?
   Yes □
   No □
   If yes, to what extent?
   □ Motivated
   □ Very motivated
   □ Undecided
3) Identify how you feel about project work in your classes?
   □ Important
   □ Appealing
   □ Irrelevant
   □ Boring
   □ Of no concern

Section III
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like it when the teacher assigns to us projects to work on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I believe that working in projects is the best way to learn English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project Work in Moroccan EFL Classroom

BOUQETYB
3. Project work allows me to practice English language more than other activities.

4. Project work helps me be more active in class and helped me to participate more than other activities.

5. Project work helped me to make new social relationships.

6. Project work activities make me pay more attention during the class session.

7. I do not feel enthusiastic when the teacher asks us to work on a project.

8. I do not pay any attention when my classmates are presenting their projects.

SECTION IV

Please indicate as appropriate

1) Do you like to work in projects?
   Yes ☐
   No ☐

   If yes, can you indicate the reason why?
   ☐ I improve my oral skills
   ☐ I enjoy work in projects
   ☐ I get good grades
   ☐ I get appraisal from the teacher

2) If you are given the choice, how many projects you want to work on per year?
   ☐ 1 project
   ☐ 2 projects
   ☐ 3 projects
   ☐ More

3) Project work allows me to become a good:
   ☐ Speaker
   ☐ Reader
   ☐ Listener
   ☐ Writer

Thank you for your time and for your highly appreciated contributions to this study
Assessment of Flipped Learning as an Innovative Method of Teaching English: A Case Study

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Received: 9/20/2021 Accepted: 12/1/2021 Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract
The article aims to assess the efficiency of flipped learning as one of the most up-to-date methods when teaching English for the EFL students in Ukraine. The significance of the study bases on the necessity to implement advanced teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic since online learning requires constructive changes in the traditional system of education. It is necessary to shift from the direct knowledge transfer to searching and cognition of new information by students, to change the teacher’s role to being ‘a facilitator’ and organizer of various academic activities. The article outlines the main characteristics of flipped learning, including flexibility, individualization, differentiation, and opportunities for students to learn at any place or time. The contribution of this research is to estimate new experiences of University students due to flipped learning implementation. It was achieved due to analyzing responses to the survey-based questionnaire of 48 learners and 23 teachers of the Department of Foreign Philology and Translation of Vinnitsia Institute of Trade and Economics of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics, evaluation of students’ performance, attendance, and attitude to the study. In order to verify results of the research, a descriptive statistical and analytical method was applied. The study results reveal that implementation of flipped learning made the educational process more effective and innovative as it improved students’ progress in language learning performance, increased their motivation and involvement, and made them more interested in learning English.

Keywords: assessment, effective implementation, facilitator of the learning process, flipped learning, innovative teaching method, Learning Management System, Ukraine’s EFL students

Introduction

Nowadays, the system of higher education in Ukraine is experiencing some constructive changes since its traditional model does not meet the current needs of society. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the transfer to online learning. In the current conditions, the teacher is becoming a facilitator of the educational process. Transformations in the educational process organization become possible due to the implementation of flipped learning as a teaching method that increases the satisfaction of students with the results achieved (Abdullah, Hussin, & Kemboja, 2021), enhancing learners’ anxiety in English speaking performance (Thoo, Hang, Lee, & Tan, 2021).

According to the flipped classroom model, the students have to search for new information and learn new materials before the classroom activities using literature sources, video and audio resources provided by the teacher on the particular topic. Thus, classroom activities are devoted to the formation of practical speaking, reading, and writing skills. Within flipped learning, there can be distinguished ‘three roles of lecturer in the learnings process; as a facilitator, an instructor and a resource. While the roles of the learners were as recipients and as partners’ (Mahalli, Nurkamto, Mujiyanto, & Yuliasri, 2019, p. 26). One of the benefits of this model is ‘its attractiveness for people with different learning styles’ (Hamdani, 2019, p. 13). As a result, students get more motivated, responsible, active, and independent.

There are quite the opposite views and researches proving the flipped learning method is not quite good and cannot substitute the traditional approach. The students and the staff preferred a lecture-based approach rather than the flipped classrooms. Although the students expressed negative attitudes toward the use of flipped classrooms, they improved their learning, and communication skills (Santikarn & Wichadee, 2018).

Contradictory research results have forced us to set the following research aim: to assess the effectiveness of flipped learning in Ukraine’s Universities when teaching EFL students. The significance of this study bases on the urgent need to find new teaching practices that can be effective within online learning.

The following research questions guide this study: 1. Are the teachers familiar with the flipped learning method and ready to implement it? 2. What barriers do the teachers have when implementing flipped learning? 3. Can the flipped learning method improve students’ learning performance and motivation, making them more involved and interested in the educational process? 4. What is the attitude of students towards flipped learning? 5. Can flipped learning be effectively implemented using the online platform MOODLE?

Literature Review

The flipped learning method has been broadly investigated and interpreted since 2012. In 2014, there was MEF University in Turkey founded, and today its educational process is based mainly on flipped learning principles. The universities implementing the flipped learning method include the world’s leading universities such as Stanford, Harvard, and many other universities of the USA, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Western Australia and the University of Adelaide, Taiwan University of Science and Technology, and others. This way, the flipped classrooms have become rather popular in higher education. It involves assigning students to
work through the primary content of a course on their own time, often by watching a recorded lecture or completing a guided reading instead of listening to a traditional in-person lecture. It frees up class time for active problem-solving, demonstrations, experiments, discussions, etc. (Saitta, Morrison, Waldrop, & Bowdon, 2016). Thus, the flipped classrooms serve the principles of individualized learning, student-oriented instruction, and constructivism, i.e., students perform lots of training activities promoting more meaningful education (Rajesh, 2015). The flipped classroom model is adaptable to the teacher’s style, methods, and circumstances (Bergmann, & Sams, 2012).

There are lots of studies on the effectiveness of flipped learning in teaching English as a foreign language. Basal (2015) implemented the flipped classroom method in an English language class to provide the perceptions of prospective English language teachers towards its application at a State University in Turkey. According to Basal (2015), a successful flipped classroom involves more than just delivering the lectures to students via video outside the class: the time spent in class should be more critical and devoted to understanding, discussing, and investigating, turning the classroom into the place of active learning. Thus, it offers ‘several benefits: free classroom time, opportunities for personalized learning, opportunities for more student-oriented learning, a continuous connection between students and teachers, increased motivation of students, a learning environment full of familiar tools, and variety in lecture content attuned to different learning styles’ (Basal, 2015, p. 33-34).

Some scientists (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016; Bane, 2014; Bezzazi, 2019; Thaichay & Sitthitikul, 2016) have researched the effectiveness of flipped classroom application in grammar teaching. They concluded that this method is vital in enhancing students’ grammar performances and emphasizing students’ autonomous study. As for flipped writing courses, Yu and Wang (2016) have conducted a survey on undergraduate English writing course students of Business. Scientists (Afrilyasanti et al., 2017) have concluded the method helped students to improve their writing skills. The scientists have also proved that ‘implementing flipped classroom instruction in the EFL university classrooms improves paragraph writing skills of students’ (Chatta & Haque, 2020, p. 228). Similarly, flipping a speaking course brings about better students’ academic achievements in verbal activity and increases their level of engagement in the communication process (Choe & Seong, 2016; Li & Zhang, 2016; Xin-Yue, 2016; Wu, ChenHsieh & Yang, 2017; Qader & Arslan, 2019; Abdullah, Hussin & Ismail, 2019).

The growing popularity of flipped learning, e-learning, blended or hybrid education is mainly due to the inefficiency of the existing traditional model (Abdullah et al., 2021; Konoplianyk & Melnykova, 2019). Despite the apparent advantages of foreign language teachers’ use of the method of flipped learning, there are several problematic issues both for teachers and students. As for the teachers, they include the high complexity of preparing e-learning materials, the need for thorough preparation of tasks and criteria for assessment. As for the students, they involve low motivation, self-motivation, and readiness to independent work. It is obvious the transfer to the model of flipped learning cannot be rapid and requires the adaptation period of time. Considering all advantages and disadvantages mentioned, we suggest the method of flipped learning can solve the problem of innovations in education.

The researchers argue that ‘because of its new model and because it brought a new atmosphere in teaching and learning, the flipped classrooms began to be applied by many
teachers and lecturers worldwide’ (Halili & Zainuddin, 2015, p. 15). Arslan, A. (2020) revealed that the USA, Malaysia, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Singapore, Somaliland, China, Taiwan, Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have the most publications on flipped learning. The author suggests that ‘there is a notable scarcity of literature from Europe’ (Arslan, 2020, p. 777). Unfortunately, Ukrainian researchers have done very few studies on flipped learning applications for teaching English as a foreign language. Insufficient research on the flipped classroom in professional foreign languages in Ukrainian universities has led to the choice of the research topic.

**Methods**

**Research Design**

This study mainly uses the descriptive-analytical method. To assess the effectiveness of flipped learning when teaching English, we provided quantitative and qualitative assessment control. The evaluation procedure involved the collection and analysis of direct and indirect results of the course learning. Immediate results of the course study were students’ assessments at the end of the course and attendance indicators. Indirect learning results included students’ attitudes, perceptions, and feelings towards the suggested course conditions, new opportunities revealed, creative development, possible problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking skills. We have evaluated the effect of studying this course on indirect results by surveying students using a Likert-scale survey.

**Participants**

We conducted our research in the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 academic years at the Department of Foreign Philology and Translation at Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics (VITE KNUTE), Ukraine. A total of 23 teachers engaged in the study and answered open-ended and yes/no questions. The participants also were 48 students aged 17-18. At the time of research, they were in the first year of their study at the Institute. Among them 64.6% (n=31) were female and 35.4% (n=17) were male. We divided all the students into four subgroups, 12 students in each one. During two academic years, flipped learning was being actively implemented in the classes of ‘English for Specific Purposes’, which is an obligatory course at the first and second years of study.

The flipped learning method is efficiently applied by the teaching staff of the Department of Foreign Philology and Translation at Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics (VITE KNUTE). Having got acquainted with the successful experience of applying the flipped learning method at the world’s leading universities (including the results of the project “Erasmus + iFlip” (iFLIP Project, 2017), the teachers of VITE KNUTE have decided to explore possible opportunities of flipped learning in teaching foreign languages. Table one discloses the distribution of classroom activities and students’ assignments they had to do. An introductory interview was held with the students of the experimental groups to announce and explain the purpose and objectives of the functional training conditions. Under these conditions, all the students worked with the same learning materials, and we held the same assessment control.
Table 1. Classroom and online activities of the course ‘English for Specific Purposes’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom activities</th>
<th>Online activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative tasks to develop speaking and writing skills</td>
<td>Lecture materials for the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming activities</td>
<td>Vocabulary online training exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debates</td>
<td>Grammar online training exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team project work</td>
<td>Forum discussions in Moodle system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer assessment of the projects done</td>
<td>Listening practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultations</td>
<td>Peer-review discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions of problems</td>
<td>Written feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar explanations</td>
<td>Quizzes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Instruments

In the context of reforming modern education, the student-oriented approach is one of the essential features in applying the method of flipped learning. This fact predetermined the research instruments chosen. Since the research instruments are tied to the study methodology, we had structured and unstructured interviews, observations, tests, and surveys. Non-directive discussions followed the interviewing as we expected some spontaneous decisions.

We prepared a survey-based online questionnaire to collect data and do our research in the Moodle platform in order to evaluate the flipped learning challenges during online learning. The survey-based questionnaire contained 15 multiple questions (multiple-choice, yes/no, and open-ended questions) covering research goals. It was designed using Moodle platform technical apps and distributed among students at the end of the semester. Afterwards we checked validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

Research Procedures

Within our research, we chose to begin with interviewing teachers with the vital question, ‘Are you familiar with flipped learning?’ Possible answers to this question were: 1. I have already applied this method. 2. I know what it is, and I know how to apply it. 3. I know what it is, but I don’t know how to apply it. 4. I have heard about this method, but I know nothing about it. 5. I don’t know what it is. The results of the pre-research survey showed that 22% of teachers of the Department have already used the flipped learning method in their practice, and another 52% did not have such an experience but showed a willingness to implement this method (‘I know what it is and how to apply it’). Thus, 77% of the surveyed teachers were ready and, at the time of the survey (2018), had the opportunity to work using flipped learning. All 23 teachers of the Department were to some extent familiar with the flipped learning method. While interviewing teaching staff, all of them expressed anxiety because of possible barriers provided by flipped learning. The flipped learning method works well when there no technical problems: University should provide Internet access, quick hyperlinks to training materials, video, and audio also work correctly. Students also need basic knowledge in information and communication technologies in order to use online materials. Any technical problem can negatively affect motivation and the learning experience.

A necessary condition for applying the method of flipped learning is the adjusted work of a Learning Management System (LMS). According to the research results, there is a high
relationship between the students’ performance and implementation of digital educational resources from the e-learning platform (Rakic, Tasic, Marjanovic, Softic, Lüftenegger, & Turcin, 2020). LMS creates a single database of e-courses and learning materials and manages the courses and students’ activity (Ivanytska, Tymoshchuk, Dovhan, Osaulchyk, & Havryliuk, 2021).

All e-courses taught in VITE KNUTE are created in LMS based on the online platform MOODLE. Each e-course contains a work program, syllabus, guidelines for studying the discipline and independent work of applicants, teaching materials for lectures and practical classes, and other necessary information. Using the MOODLE platform allows performing input, current, and output control of students’ knowledge quickly. Our previous long-term experience of applying LMS based on the online platform MOODLE will enable to adapt the flipped learning method and remove barriers to its perception and application (Table two).

Table 2. Barriers to the application of the flipped learning method in the process of teaching English and assessment of the degree of their removal in VITE KNUTE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Removed barriers</th>
<th>Partially removed barriers</th>
<th>Barriers to be removed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes and complications in forms of control and knowledge assessment</td>
<td>The high complexity of preparation of educational materials</td>
<td>The motivation of applicants to watch videos and perform tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The unwillingness of teachers to implement the method</td>
<td>The need for thorough preparation of group tasks and criteria for their assessment</td>
<td>The reluctance of students for independent analysis of new material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the usual role of the teacher to the role of a ‘facilitator’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

While applying the method of flipped learning by the Department of Foreign Philology and Translation of VITE KNUTE, there were no technical barriers revealed, thus, we could prepare the best teaching materials giving students an excellent opportunity to work on it beforehand. The barriers partially removed include some limitations connected with the teacher’s responsibilities. These barriers, such as the high complexity of teaching materials and the need for thorough preparation of group tasks and criteria for their assessment, were partially removed by teachers during the initial stage.

Results

The evaluation results of the of quantitative indicators while applying the method of flipped learning in teaching the course ‘English for Specific Purposes’ are shown in Figure one.

![Figure 1. Average passing grade and attendance rate comparison (n=48), %](image-url)
Figure one presents the middle passing grade and improvement compared to the attendance rate during two academic years.

![Graph showing the improvement in passing grade and attendance rate during two academic years.]

Figure 2. Opinion of the students on the efficiency of the flipped learning method within the course ‘English for Specific Purposes’ (n=48), points (1 = very ineffective to 5 = very effective)

The evaluation results showed that the average passing grade in the 2019/2020 academic year increased by 8.9% compared to the results of the 2018/2019 academic year. The study also shows an increase in attendance rate by 11.4% in the 2019/2020 academic year compared to the same period in the 2018/2019 academic year. According to the survey conducted at the end of the course, the level of positive perception and far going opportunities in the future reaches 90-95% (Figure two). The Likert-scale survey asked the students to rate the effectiveness of different elements of the flipped classroom. The students rated aspects on a scale of one to five (1=very ineffective, 2=somewhat ineffective, 3=neither effective, nor ineffective, 4=somewhat effective, and 5=very adequate). The results of assessing the students’ satisfaction with the elements of flipped learning in teaching the course ‘English for Specific Purposes’ are shown in Figure three.

![Survey results showing students' satisfaction with different elements of flipped classroom.]

Figure 3. Survey results on the students’ satisfaction with the course ‘English for Specific Purposes’ (n=48), %
According to the results of our research, most students agree that online components helped in improving the learning process (100%). We noted as well that flipped classrooms offered more interaction with peers and the teacher (100%), encouraged interest in the course (97%), students truly define the content of the course productive for professional needs (96%). They consider the feedback on assignments and in-course tests to be helpful (92%) and this method to be helpful in developing personal autonomy and independence (90%). 85% of students agree the lecturer encouraged their interest in the course.

**Discussion**

Our research aim was to find out whether flipped learning is efficient enough within its implementation in teaching English. The presented study demonstrates that students got satisfied with flipped learning and characterize it as an effective educational environment for learners. Its practical applying activated the main characteristics of flipped learning, namely flexibility, individualization, differentiation, opportunities for students to learn at any place or time. Thus, students became more motivated and independent, responsible and self-confident, having improved language learning performance. These results coincide with those obtained in similar studies by Abdullah, Hussin & Kemboja (2021). They also agree with Thoo, Hang, Lee, & Tan (2021), who proved flipped classrooms enhance anxiety of learners in English speaking performance. The research conclusions align with Webb & Doman (2016), in the part it leads to increased gains on learning outcomes and enhances cooperation and task orientation between teachers and students, according to Strayer (2012). Within flipped classrooms, we have distinguished three possible roles of teachers in the learning process, as a facilitator, an instructor, and a resource, while the roles of the learners were as recipients and as partners, according to Mahalli, Nurkamto, Mujiyanto, & Yuliasri (2019). Thus, we have revealed no severe facts to prove flipped learning inefficiency.

Instead, in the present study, we have found out possible problematic issues both for teachers (the complexity in preparing e-learning materials, the need for thorough preparation of tasks and criteria for assessment) and students (low motivation, weak readiness to independent work). The given results reveal the close connection between the efficiency of the flipped learning method and the preparatory period for flipped classrooms conducted by teaching staff. During the initial transition period it is necessary to get much work done: to revise the curriculum and divide the available teaching material, transfer some resources to vodcasts, and leave the rest for the classroom activities. While applying the flipped learning, university teachers have to review or prepare new group tasks, processes of control, and criteria for assessing students’ work done. As our experience shows, teachers can remove these barriers within one-two year of the initial transition period of the method implementation.

To the group of limitations that must be overcome while applying flipped learning in VITE KNUTE, we also include some barriers connected with motivation, self-motivation, and willingness of students to work independently. These possible problems mainly relate to the degree of responsibility of students and are typical for applying the vast majority of other student-oriented methods in teaching foreign languages.
Conclusion

The performed study has revealed that the flipped learning method can be successfully implemented into the innovative teaching of foreign languages to University students as a type of blended learning. Considering the current requirements of the modern education system, a new role of the teacher-facilitator makes this method highly effective under conditions of online learning. This model achieves success due to its flexibility, individualization of the educational process, and full focus on the student-oriented approach. This teaching method promotes the active development of speech skills and individual qualities and increases their academic performance. The research data indicate that the flipped learning method increased autonomy of the students, made them more motivated and responsible for their learning outcomes, and formed necessary hard and soft skills. Flipped classrooms offered more interaction between peers and the teacher, providing successful feedback on assignments and in-course tests, while the suggested online resources were well-adjusted and helpful. It became possible due to a well-organized LMS with a single database of e-courses and learning materials available to the students.

We recommended to organize workshops and seminars for the teachers to gain skills for the adequate implementation of this method. The researchers also suggest carrying out further studies to find out what students’ foreign language skills, namely writing, speaking, reading, or listening, can be formed more effectively under this method.

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English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language Preservice Teacher Cognitions: Research Insights from around the World (2005-2021)

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Received: 6/22/2021    Accepted: 11/19/2021    Published: 12/15/2021

Abstract. This review examined English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) preservice teacher cognition studies spanning a 17-year period (2005 to 2021). The main objective was to explore the nature and development of preservice ESL and EFL teacher cognitions as they relate to their teacher-education coursework and teaching practice. Findings indicate that preservice ESL/EFL teacher cognitions are complex, multifaceted, recursive, and frequently related to their experiences as language learners. Although studies included in this review were conducted in different international contexts, the findings were consistent: there is a need for supportive and comprehensive preservice-teacher preparation that accounts for three factors. (1) Valuing preservice teachers’ beliefs as language learners, (2) facilitating preservice teachers’ negotiation of newer beliefs resulting from teacher education coursework, and (3) preparing them to negotiate tensions in their interactions with their mentors in field placements. This paper concludes by discussing pedagogical implications for teacher education programs.

Keywords: cognitions, English as a Foreign Language, English as a Second Language, perceptions, preservice teachers, teacher education

Introduction

The Oxford Dictionary (2019) defines cognition as “The mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses.” At first glance, we can already anticipate the heavily mental and mostly abstract components of cognition. Being a mental action through which a person acquires knowledge, cognition can be seen as a dynamic process. Of great significance here is the fact that this definition refers to cognition as a process of understanding that combines abstract components (thoughts) with concrete elements (experiences and senses). Not surprisingly, research on preservice teacher cognition has underscored the complexity of examining teacher cognition since the latter involves conscious and unconscious beliefs that influence teaching practice without being always concretely articulated by teachers. For instance, Burns, Freeman, and Edwards (2015) described the cognitions of language teachers as: “situated, dynamic, mediated, and inherently complex” (p. 597) while Borg (2003) underscored the complexity of examining teacher cognitions: “teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs” (p. 81). By saying that, Borg refers to the networks of beliefs that teachers draw upon as personalized and context sensitive. Such distinction adds an additional layer of complexity to the examination of teacher cognition. That is, such examination should consider teachers’ individual differences and the unique teaching context(s) where they evolve. In this view, preservice teacher cognition research has been interested in exploring how preservice teachers’ beliefs develop as a result of engaging in coursework, reflection, and practicum. In addition, this strand of research examines how cognitions facilitate or mitigate preservice teachers’ learning experiences and teaching practice.

This paper aimed at reviewing 23 empirical studies on ESL and EFL preservice teacher cognitions from around the world. The selection of empirical studies followed specific inclusion criteria. Reviewed studies had to be published between 2005 to 2021, examine preservice teacher cognitions in ESL/EFL contexts, and represent all continents of the world. In this regard, one of the researcher’s goals was to identify whether preservice teacher cognition research yielded similar/consistent findings despite the diverse educational and international contexts. At the same time, the researcher attempted to cover a wide array of cognitions related to preservice teachers’ beliefs as language learners, as students in teacher education programs, and as emerging practitioners. In so doing, the researcher adopted a thematic approach in reviewing empirical preservice teacher cognition research before concluding with potential pedagogical implications for educators and teacher education programs.

Literature Review

Appendix A overviews the studies that investigated ESL and EFL preservice teacher cognitions spanning from 2005 to 2021. Refer to Appendix A (pp. 23-24) for information about the main focus and major findings of the studies reviewed in this paper. Although this review examined ESL/EFL preservice teacher cognitions spanning from 2005 to 2021, it is noteworthy that the thematic patterns we enumerate below are consistent with the thematic patterns identified by Borg (2015) when he reviewed language teacher cognition studies spanning a period from 1989 to 2004. Specially, Borg (2015) noted the following.

These studies shed light on a number of themes in the study of pre-service language teacher cognition: (a) the influence of prior language learning experience on pre-service
teachers’ cognitions; (b) pre-service teachers’ beliefs about language teaching; (c) cognitions in relation to practicum experiences and (d) pre-service teachers’ instructional decision-making and practical knowledge (p. 58).

**Preservice Teachers’ Beliefs about Evaluations**

In *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*, Lortie (1975) argued that the in-service teachers’ beliefs about teaching are influenced by their experiences as learners or what he called teachers’ *apprenticeship of observation*. Ostensibly, teacher education and practicum are not the only factors that contribute to preservice teachers’ perceptions and beliefs about teaching. On this account, referring to preservice teachers, He, Valcke, and Aelterman (2011) pointed out that “any teaching that challenges their educational beliefs would be dismissed as theoretical, unworkable, or simply wrong” (p. 1297). The authors went on to emphasize the role of preservice teachers’ beliefs in shaping their every instructional move. The focus of their study was on how teachers’ beliefs affect their evaluations of students’ work: “teachers’ evaluations are usually done in the context of comparing worthiness, appropriateness, goodness, validity, effect, etc.” (He et al., 2011, p. 1298). Thus, evaluations, even when they rely on specific criteria/rubrics, are subjective and influenced by teachers’ preferences and beliefs. As the authors readily noted, when evaluating students, preservice teachers might not always be aware that their evaluations are ineluctably subjective and characterized by categorizations and value judgements. He et al. 2011 examined 56 pre-service teachers in a four-year elementary education program from three normal universities in China. There were 39 female and 17 male preservice teachers majoring in Chinese, Mathematics, Science and English. Regarding data collection, the authors used “entry and exit individual writing interviews, audiotaped group interviews, face to face interviews with 20, 18, and 18 per-service students from three universities respectively” (He et al., p. 1299). Data was analyzed according to five *structural categories of evaluation*: who, when, how, why and what.

As such, findings indicated that preservice teachers’ beliefs about evaluation could be classified into two main categories: *student centered beliefs* and *teacher centered* beliefs. On the one hand, preservice teachers referred to their experiences as learners when they reflected on their beliefs about evaluations. To illustrate, one of the participants in the study, Yang Xiu, compared his memories of his teachers who used to mistreat students with his future teaching self, “when I was young, I often observed my classmates being reprimanded by teachers for trivial things. From then on, I promised to be a good teacher who could evaluate and praise pupils fairly” (He et al.,2011, pp. 1301-1302). On the other hand, participants in the study expressed their frustration with the notable gap between their beliefs about evaluations and what is expected from them once they start their teaching career. To bridge this gap, the study invites teacher education programs to provide comprehensive training to preservice teachers to help them conciliate their own beliefs about evaluations with the pedagogical and instructional contingencies in this regard.

**Preservice Teacher Cognition Development during/after Teacher Education Program**

The articles that examined preservice teacher cognition development during and after teacher-education coursework started from the premise that student teachers embark in their teacher education programs with naïve, subjective, and pedagogically inadequate understandings of teaching and learning (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). Other studies noted an impact of theoretical
coursework but did not specify the precise nature of such impact. Likewise, Wong (2010) examined the beliefs of 25 Bachelor’s in TESL student teachers to ascertain whether their beliefs change or remain stable over time. The findings indicated that most participants (96%) supported the belief that learning a second language is easier for children than adults. The other two beliefs about language learning on which most participants agreed were the special abilities of certain people to learn a language (88%) and the presence of a national origin variable to language learning (56% of the participants thought that Malaysians were “very good” language learners).

Regarding language learning difficulty, 68% of participants believed that some languages are easier to learn than others are. At the same time, 80% of them believed that reading in a foreign language is easier than writing. In sum: Wong (2010) indicated that preservice teachers’ beliefs have slightly changed when they reported on their beliefs 14 months after the study. For instance, prior to the study, 76% of participants believed that learning grammar is the most important aspect of learning a foreign language; however, 14 months later, only 60% of participants maintained the same belief. Additionally, 80% believed reading in a foreign language was easier than writing. After the study, however, this number dropped to 68%. As you can see, while some preservice teachers’ beliefs about language learning did not drastically change, Wong (2010) emphasized that these perceptions are not set in stone.

A concrete example of the impact of education coursework on ESL preservice teacher cognitions can be found in (Amory, 2020) where the author traced the learning and developmental trajectory of a female preservice teacher during her MA in TESL. Informed by a Sociocultural approach to second language teacher education, the participant’s academic preparation emphasized dialogic, student-centered pedagogies that foster student engagement. While confirming previous researchers’ observations about the complex, recursive, and multifaceted aspects of preservice teacher cognitions, this longitudinal study underlined the dialectic relationship between sociocultural-based teacher education preparation and preservice teacher cognition on the one hand, and the dialogic nature of preservice teacher cognition on the other hand. In other words, the ESL preservice teacher in this study immersed in a recursive process of practice and reflection. Turkish EFL teacher education offers another concrete example. Specifically, Kavanoz, Yüksel, and Varol (2017) reported that the teacher education program created an increase in preservice teachers’ awareness and “an improvement in their understanding of the processes inherent to foreign language teaching and learning” (p. 119).

From another perspective, Burri (2015) examined 15 student teachers’ beliefs about pronunciation pedagogy and instruction during a postgraduate course on pronunciation. Ten student teachers in the study identified as nonnative English speakers (NNESs). The researcher collected data using focus group interviews, questionnaires, observations, and interviews. These methodological choices allowed the researcher to collect reliable data on how native and NNES student teachers’ cognitions developed while taking the pronunciation pedagogy course. Findings indicated that preservice teachers’ cognition development is a complex process. It is notable, nonetheless, that the student teachers’ cognitions (beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge) about pronunciation pedagogy have significantly developed during and after the course on pronunciation pedagogy. Let us offer a concrete example to illustrate this point. Student teachers shifted their pronunciation instruction strategy from favoring teaching individual sounds (segmentals) to a more balanced approach to pronunciation instruction that focused on the
melody of the English language (suprasegmentals). It is also worthy of note that cognitions about pronunciation pedagogy were subject to development and transformation regardless of the student teachers’ L1s (native languages). Along similar lines, NNES preservice teachers expressed an increase in awareness of their spoken English. In this respect, the collaboration between native and NNES preservice teachers played a critical role in facilitating participants’ cognition growth. Thanks to collaborative teaching, the NNES student teachers improved their self-perceived pronunciation skills while the native English speaking student teachers have shown a growth in their beliefs in the NNESs potential for teaching English pronunciation.

Mattheoudakis (2007) examined preservice teachers’ beliefs about EFL teaching and learning in Greece. The study included 66 participants. The researcher monitored the progress of 36 preservice teachers from their first year in the education program until the fourth year. A second group of 30 preservice teachers who chose to do their practicum participated in the study. Using self-report questionnaires, the researcher aimed at identifying changes in preservice teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning EFL during the teacher education program. Particularly, Mattheoudakis focused on the role of teaching practice on preservice teachers’ beliefs. The findings suggested that preservice teachers majoring in education at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece started the program with pre-established beliefs about English language learning and teaching. In this view, most incoming students believed in the importance of vocabulary and grammar in language learning. The study also indicated that attending an education program benefited to most participants in developing their teacher cognitions. Of equal importance, the study emphasized that cognition development and change is a gradual process. Most important, while the education program coursework contributed to a significant transformation in preservice teachers’ cognitions about teaching and learning EFL, the study revealed that practicum had a lesser impact. In the same fashion, Gürsoy (2013) confirmed that both prior language learning experiences and teacher education coursework contributed to ELT trainees’ developing cognitions about teaching and learning English.

The Effects of Practicum on ESL/EFL Preservice Teacher Cognitions

Teaching remains a highly cognitive activity where a myriad of factors—including but not limited to knowledge, learning experience, belief system, pedagogical inclinations etc.—shape preservice teachers’ beliefs. From his vintage point, Borg (2003) explained this complex cognitive sphere by referring to teachers as active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically oriented, personalized and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs” (p.81). Although research that examined how practicum shapes ESL and EFL preservice teacher cognitions did not indicate an overwhelming potential for practicum in developing ESL/EFL preservice teacher cognitions, there is evidence; however, that preservice teachers are able to reflect on their pre-existing beliefs related to teaching, deconstruct some of their previous cognitions, and construct new ones. For instance, Yuan and Lee (2014) tracked Chinese EFL pre-service teachers' changing beliefs during practicum. The authors concluded that belief changes followed four processes. (1) **Confirmation**: some teaching practices confirmed their prior beliefs, (2) **Realization** involved awareness of a new belief, (3) **Elaboration**: consolidation of existing beliefs, and (4) **Disagreement**: rejecting a previously held belief.
In Turkey, Çimen and Daloğlu (2019) concluded that their six preservice EFL teacher participants’ pre-practicum cognitions were shaped by their experiences as learners and by teacher education coursework. After practicum, the EFL preservice teachers improved their classroom management strategies, but there was limited improvement in overcoming educational policy-related challenges. In like manner, Albaba (2017) noted that the student teachers in his study believed they were not prepared enough to handle classroom teaching before they started practicum. During practicum, participants had limited autonomy. Their beliefs about *good teaching* often conflicted with their mentors’ views. After two years of full-time teaching, participants felt that the teacher education program equipped them with useful theoretical tools, but they realized that school expectations limited their autonomy. In contrast, Yüksel and Başaran (2019) found that practicum provided preservice teachers with a real-life experience allowing them to transfer some of their beliefs as learners into their teaching practice.

In the South African context, Heeralal and Bayaga (2011) described the challenges faced by South African preservice teachers during practicum. The authors noticed that most of these challenges were due to a lack of preparation and difficulties in adapting with school mentors. Another study, from China this time, underlined how EFL student teachers refer to their learning repertoires and experiences to become agentive—and in a sense selective—in the way they implement their instruction.

[Although] these 4 student teachers had shown different theoretical orientations in the protocols, they shared similar patterns of instructional practices in the Teaching Practicum. It was also found that the new teaching method practiced in the teacher education programme was re-conceptualised by these student teachers in the actual teaching context because of the strong influence of their personal agency beliefs (Tang, Lee & Chun, 2012, p. 90).

Finally, Buss (2017) explained that undergraduate TESL students in two Canadian universities, who received explicit instruction on how to teach pronunciation, became more confident about their ability to teach the subject and cognizant of their speech limitations. Equally important is the fact that interactions between the native English speaking student teacher group and the nonnative English speaking student teacher group helped the latter in their cognitive development.

**Preservice Teacher Perceptions of Teachers’ Knowledge and Performance**

This section reviewed two studies that examined preservice teachers’ beliefs about teacher-related aspects (elements of English teachers’ knowledge base and what makes a good or bad teacher). In this context, Cárdenas and Osorio (2009) reported on five preservice teachers’ beliefs about what constitutes the most fundamental elements of English teachers’ knowledge base. The participants were preservice teachers in their last year of a bachelor’s degree program in Foreign Languages at Universidad de La Salle, Colombia. All participants took their practicum at Academia La Salle San Benildo School where they worked with first and fifth graders. *Table 1* overviews the participants’ beliefs and comments about different components related to English teachers’ knowledge base.
Table 1. Summary of findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge base component</th>
<th>Participants’ belief(s)</th>
<th>Participants’ comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Experience as learners</td>
<td>Participants’ experiences as learners shaped their perceptions of teachers’ knowledge base</td>
<td>Mabel: “My experiences as a student might be helpful for me to understand future students of mine.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Content knowledge</td>
<td>Most participants described content knowledge as extremely important.</td>
<td>Natalia: “If you don’t have language mastery, it will be more difficult to have a good performance.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Knowledge of students</td>
<td>Knowing the students facilitates the teaching task.</td>
<td>Julieth: “It’s important to know what the students like and dislike to take the right decisions when teaching.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td>60% of participants viewed pedagogical knowledge as ‘totally important’</td>
<td>Yurani: “It’s not enough to have content knowledge, you need to know how, to whom, and in which context to teach”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. Adopted from Cárdenas and Osorio (2009, pp. 119-125)

Fajet et al. (2005) evaluated preservice teachers’ beliefs about the characteristics of good and bad teachers. Using questionnaires, surveys, and interviews, the authors examined the perceptions of 62 students enrolled in an introductory education course at the University of Miami, Florida. It was found that participants’ perceptions of good teachers were classified according to themes. The most important theme was related to pedagogy and classroom management: “students believed that good teachers are creative and make learning enjoyable, fun, and interesting” (p. 721). The second most important theme was related to the personal characteristics. For example, attributes such as enthusiasm, energy, passion, motivation, patience, and honesty were viewed as important. Participants had also emphasized that good teachers build rapport with students and maintain positive attitudes toward them. Surprisingly, the least important theme according to the participants was subject matter knowledge.

Regarding poor teachers, attitudes toward students was seen as the most important theme. Participants believed that poor teachers do not care about their students (whether they learn or not). The personal characteristics theme came second: participants used adjectives like rigid, uncaring, and boring to describe poor teachers. Poor pedagogy and classroom management was the third theme. On this account, one participant explained that “bad teachers just give worksheets and lecture all the time. It’s like, O.K. read chapter 11 and answer the questions.” The fourth theme concerned teachers’ attitudes toward the teaching profession. One participant thought poor teachers are “just doing it to get the paycheck.” (p. 723). Finally, similar to the participants’ perceptions of good teachers, the lack of subject matter knowledge was the least mentioned characteristic in their beliefs about poor teachers.

Discussion

As mentioned earlier, Borg (2003) delineated four major factors that contribute to the development of teacher cognitions. First, he mentioned schooling and prior experiences that
teachers had as language learners as a source of common beliefs about teaching. Second, he described the role of professional coursework in teacher cognition: typically, coursework is provided by universities (teacher educator/education programs) and training institutes. Third, contextual factors may lead to the modification or adjustment of certain previously held beliefs. Finally, classroom practice refers to the interaction between teacher cognitions and contextual factors including the subject being taught, the students, the school setting…etc. Although the studies included in this review approached preservice teacher cognitions through different lenses and in different contexts, their analyses focused on four main issues/themes related to preservice teacher beliefs and cognitions.

(1) The effect of prior language learning experiences on pre-service teachers’ cognitions,
(2) The influence of teaching practice on preservice teacher cognitions,
(3) Preservice teachers’ beliefs about language teachers and teaching,
(4) The effects of teacher education coursework in shaping preservice teacher cognitions.

Prior Language Learning Experiences’ Effects on Preservice Teacher Cognitions

In fact, most studies included in this review emphasized the critical role of preservice teachers’ prior language learning experiences in shaping their beliefs about English language teaching. Indeed, 16 of the 23 studies reviewed in this paper explicitly mentioned that preservice teachers start their teacher education programs with a set of previously held beliefs about language teaching. While these beliefs remain malleable and subject to change/adjustment after teacher education coursework and practicum, the process of cognitive change remains lengthy and complex. That is, preservice teachers’ cognitions develop in a recursive and reflective fashion. The more ESL/EFL preservice teachers are exposed to theoretical coursework and engaged in teaching practicum, the more likely they are to reflect, evaluate, and revise their beliefs about teaching and learning in ESL/EFL contexts. In other words, preservice teachers’ first interactions with new theories and teaching methods would frequently be evaluated against their prior experiences as language learners. As such, preservice teachers might sometimes resist accepting a different belief if it conflicts with one of their strongly held views about teaching and learning. In this view, Simon (2009) argued that “belief change is highly complex; cognitive change does not imply behavioral change; belief change may occur as confirmation or restructuring of existing belief systems” (p.23). This constant back and forth between deconstructing prior held beliefs and—occasionally—constructing new or more elaborate ones remains a critical phase in preservice teachers academic and professional growth.

The Influence of Practicum/Teaching Practice

Most studies that included a practicum portion in their research design concluded that teaching practice contributed to some extent to the development of preservice teacher cognitions in matters related to classroom management, decision-making, collaboration with peers, content knowledge, and understanding student needs. However, it is important to note that ESL/EFL preservice teacher cognition literature emphasized the gap that exists between preservice teachers’ own beliefs about English language teaching and the reality, requirements, and expectations of the school communities and especially the mentors with whom they interact during practicum. As discussed in He et al. (2011), Yuan and Lee (2014), Albaba (2017), and Mattheoudakis (2007), the tensions between preservice teachers’ own beliefs and their mentors’/schools’ expectations creates a feeling of frustration and demotivation among
many student teachers. Quite often, preservice teachers lack the support and preparation they so desperately need to negotiate moments of disagreement, tension, and conflict that might occur during their field placement. Conflictual beliefs could also arise between preservice teachers’ experiences as learners and their emerging identities as teachers. To illustrate, Borg explained in an interview with Birello that it is normal for preservice teachers to encounter tension when confronting two conflicting beliefs. Borg elaborated by asserting that:

There are teachers who say it is important to get learners to discover grammar for themselves, but it is also important for me to cover the curriculum quickly so there is a tension there between a belief in the need for efficiency and another belief (Birello, 2012, p. 91).

Central to all of this is the role of teacher education programs in creating channels that help mediate such conflicts and facilitate ESL/EFL student teachers’ experience in conciliating their prior beliefs with the novel ones encountered in practicum. While mentors supervising student teachers in public schools have more experience and pedagogical knowledge, it is critical to allow student teachers to voice their opinions and practice different instructional approaches. In this sense, teacher education programs and school mentors should act as facilitators rather than authority figures by allowing student teachers to be creative and agentive during their field placement.

**ESL/EFL Pre-Service Teachers’ Beliefs about Teachers and Teaching**

—Borg (2003) illustrated the difficulties that preservice teachers encounter when trying to visualize and predict their future teaching selves. He refers to preservice teachers’ “day-to-day outlook on their careers, and ‘very few (. . .) dared to visualize, with confidence and clarity what their in-service experience might be like” (p. 64). Interestingly, the studies reviewed in this paper emphasized the role of ESL/EFL preservice teachers’ beliefs that date back to their language learning experiences in shaping their first conceptualizations of English language teaching and teachers. For instance, relying largely on their experiences as language learners, most participants in Cárdenas and Osorio (2009) outlined the sets of knowledge base components and teaching-related practices that teachers should possess. They especially highlighted the influence of their experiences as learners in facilitating their understanding of students’ needs. Teacher cognitions are dynamic and reflect a constant back and forth between reflection and practice. While the teacher education coursework offers student teachers the opportunity to reflect on their practice, practicum rarely provides students teachers with such opportunities to be reflective practitioners. As discussed earlier, there is a need to bridge the gap between the entirely *theoretical* nature of the teacher education coursework and the *practice-oriented* nature of practicum. Of great significance here is the role of university supervisors—who are typically doctoral students in education—as mediators to help bridge the gap and the disconnect between teacher education programs and schools/mentors. In the same fashion, preservice teachers refer to their prior cognitions when interacting with their mentors and when evaluating/reflecting on other teachers. It is important to note, moreover, that the more distant preservice teachers’ beliefs are from their mentors, the more tension and frustration preservice teachers tend to encounter. Likewise, preservice teachers’ portrayals of *good* and *bad* teachers in Fajet et al. (2005) were largely informed by their own experiences as language learners.
The Effect of Teacher Education in Shaping ESL/EFL Pre-Service Teachers’ Cognitions

ESL/EFL preservice teachers often start their teaching education coursework with a naïve understanding of teaching and learning. However, it is important to note that the studies reviewed in this paper revealed a significant effect of teacher education coursework and academic preparation on developing preservice teachers’ cognitions (AlBaba, 2017; Amory; 2020, Burri, 2015; Buss, 2017; Çimen & Daloğlu, 2019; Da Silva, 2005; Guerrettaz et al., 2020; Šipošová, 2021; Tang, Lee & Chun, 2012; Wong, 2010). Of great significance here is what AlBaba (2017) revealed regarding the long-term impact of teacher education coursework on EFL preservice teachers. To illustrate, when his participants were interviewed two years after starting their full-time teaching jobs, they explained that teacher education coursework equipped them with an adequate theoretical foundation in teaching and learning EFL. Accordingly, we can argue that teacher education programs might potentially offer effective and safe transition venues where ESL/EFL preservice teachers are encouraged and trained to negotiate their past and current/learned beliefs before embarking in practicum where contextual factors are more contingent and stressful.

There is, however, a need to provide adequate and individualized support to ESL/EFL student teachers to help them develop their language educator identity. Although the theoretical coursework is invaluable in this regard, it remains just one piece of the puzzle. ESL/EFL preservice teachers often feel overwhelmed by the discrepancies between theory and practice. That is, what they learn in their teacher education coursework may not always translate to better practice during practicum. Contextual factors need to be considered to better assist every ESL/EFL student teacher navigate and negotiate their field placement. In simple terms, each classroom, school, mentor, and student teacher is different. Taking these individual/contextual differences into account would maximize the chances of ESL/EFL student teachers to thrive during practicum.

Implications

This section set forth to explore how ESL/EFL preservice teachers’ cognitions may contribute to the understanding and perhaps examination of in-service teaching practice. At the same time, challenges that could prevent connections and correlations between preservice teacher cognitions and in-service teacher experiences will be discussed. It is also relevant to underscore the complex and abstract aspects of teacher cognitions and beliefs. The first implication relates to the role of ESL/EFL preservice teacher cognitions, experiences, and beliefs as language learners in shaping their future teaching selves. The reviewed literature indicated that preservice teachers rely on their beliefs as language learners when negotiating different or newer beliefs either in their coursework or practicum. In like manner, preservice teachers’ performance as learners and their perceptions of the good and bad teachers they had as language learners appear to be decisive factors in shaping their future teaching practice. In other words, it is possible that in-service teachers reproduce teaching methods that combine what they perceived as good instructional practices from their own repertoires as language learners and from the teachers they considered to be role models as far as effective instruction is concerned.

Seen in this light, teacher education programs could play a significant role in supporting their student teacher candidates by identifying their beliefs about teaching and learning early on in the program. In so doing, teacher education programs could create an inclusive academic preparation.
that builds on student teachers’ own perceptions toward the consolidation and development of familiar as well as newer beliefs about teaching and learning. What is evident here is that learners’ schemata hold valuable predictors of future teaching performance. With that in mind, longitudinal studies that focus on teachers’ experiences as language learners, student teachers, and in-service teachers have the potential of revealing if such correlations exist. The challenge as Burns et al. (2015) pointed out remains in substantiating and making sense of teachers’ complex thought systems. In this sense, the authors argued that the challenge “is how to think beyond our current empirical structures and categories to capture this mental work. To paraphrase Yeats’s observation, we may no longer be able to separate the dancer from the dance” (p. 597). To put it otherwise, teacher cognitions may sometimes be impenetrable, yet they are inseparable from their owners’ teaching practice. Alternatively, exploring how preservice teachers’ experiences as language learners influence their cognitions can be approached differently in a way that would not necessarily require a longitudinal study. That is, teaching expertise research could examine the type of learner and preservice teacher beliefs and experiences that certain designated expert teachers had. Of great significance here is the potential for uncovering if expert teachers take similar routes in their journey toward expertise and success in teaching. The challenge remains, however, in establishing reliable criteria for selecting expert teacher participants and coming up with a concrete definition of successful/effective teaching.

The findings also support the idea that a combination of theoretical coursework and practicum would contribute to the consolidation of preservice teachers’ existing beliefs and the reevaluation of emerging beliefs. It would make sense, therefore, if teacher education programs train student teachers to deal with teaching-related practices by providing theory and practice informed training. Central to all of this is the opportunity that such preparation could offer in terms of helping ESL/EFL preservice teachers negotiate and conciliate what is often viewed as a set of conflicting beliefs. More specifically, if teacher education programs can provide this type of mentoring and support, preservice teachers would be better prepared for their field placements where they will inevitably encounter some tension; one that arises from the interaction between their own views on teaching and those of their schools and mentors.

Of equal importance, ESL/EFL preservice teachers should remain open and receptive to new ideas and be able to revise/reevaluate their conceptions if necessary. By helping ESL/EFL student teachers negotiate these experiences, teacher education programs would maximize the chances of their student teachers to have productive teaching experiences in their field placements and later in their teaching careers. That is, the more constructive and diverse teaching and learning experiences that ESL/EFL preservice teachers are exposed to, the more sophisticated knowledge schemata they would be able to develop. In this view, Tsui (2003) considered rich knowledge schemata to be a key attribute of expert teachers. While theoretical coursework is necessary, ESL/EFL preservice teachers would learn best about teaching by teaching. The more they teach, the more experiences they can add to their repertoires and knowledge schemata.

Lastly, the context and quality of the practicum or field placement experiences remain critical. For instance, the mentor teacher, the school culture, and the quality of feedback preservice teachers receive remain integral parts of their personal and professional development. As such, a good student teacher may not thrive in practicum if they are placed with an inflexible or
inexperienced mentor. Conversely, an average student teacher may exceed their performance potential if paired with an experienced and supportive mentor. Of equal importance is the quality of the feedback that student teachers receive from their mentors during practicum. In this view, by directing student teachers’ attention to reasonable areas of improvement/focus, highlighting their strengths before their weaknesses, and respecting their views, mentors would pave the path of their ESL/EFL student teachers toward a successful teaching career.

**Conclusion**

This paper sought to examine empirical ESL/EFL preservice teacher cognition research published between 2005 to date. The main objective was to explore the nature and development of preservice ESL and EFL teacher cognitions as they relate to their education coursework and teaching practice. As this review has shown, preservice teacher cognitions are complex, multifaceted, recursive, sometimes impenetrable, and usually related to preservice teachers’ own experiences as language learners. Interestingly, although studies included in this review have been conducted in different instructional, educational, and international contexts, the findings have been consistent. Broadly speaking, preservice teachers’ experiences as learners and their actual potential as student teachers and future educators aside, the literature has also emphasized the critical role of teacher education programs in the academic preparation and professional development of preservice teachers. Accordingly, the reviewed literature invites teacher education programs to provide a solid, supportive, and comprehensive ESL/EFL preservice-teacher preparation that accounts for three indispensable factors. (1) Valuing and building on preservice teachers’ beliefs as English language learners, (2) facilitating preservice teachers’ negotiation of newer beliefs resulting from teacher education coursework, and (3) preparing preservice teachers to negotiate tensions resulting from conflictual beliefs between them and their mentors. Clearly, it is critical for student teachers to have a solid academic foundation that values their beliefs and help them construct and implement newer ones without being alienated. In sum, this review of preservice ESL/EFL teacher cognition research has shown that having a successful teacher education experience is a stepping-stone toward a successful teaching career.

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**References**


**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Reviewed Studies, Their Focus, and Major Findings**

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ESL Students’ Readiness for Self-Directed Learning in Improving English Writing Skills

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Received:10/3/2021 Accepted:11/21/2021 Published:12/17/2021

Abstract
Self-directed learning among students, particularly at the upper secondary level, is still underexplored in Malaysia. Further understanding of ESL students’ readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills is crucial to exploit the advantages of this learning method for their benefit. Thus, this study aimed to examine the levels of self-directedness among secondary school students and their readiness to apply self-directed learning in improving English writing skills through a survey design. A total of 50 ESL students in a secondary school responded to two sets of questionnaires that measured different variables in this research. The first questionnaire included a self-rating scale of self-directed learning, which consisted of awareness, learning strategies, learning activities, evaluation, and interpersonal skills. The second questionnaire contained questions about students’ readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills. Sampling was done randomly without considering students’ academic level of English. The findings found that most students possessed a medium level of self-directedness with not much difference with the high-level ones. The study then revealed a positive relationship between students’ level of self-directedness and students’ readiness to incorporate self-directed learning in English writing skills. For instance, students with a high level of self-directedness scored higher in students’ readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills than those with a low level of self-directedness. Future studies should consider self-directed learning strategies to promote lifelong effects of positive attributes towards learning experiences, such as discipline, attention, responsible, and creativity in planning learning objectives.

Keywords: ESL student, English writing skills, level of directedness, self-directed learning, students’ readiness

Introduction

Self-directed learning is an inclination to pursue learning activities in which the individual takes ownership and personal responsibility for their learning experiences. In self-directed learning, learners are responsible for formulating and conducting their initiative and effort without teachers, parents, and friends (Knowles, 1975). However, an advisor can play a part in this learning as a gatekeeper to the students’ learning practice. Self-regulated learning is another similar term to self-directed learning. Self-regulated learning is a dynamic and positive process that allows learners to create their learning objectives and then supervise, modulate, and ensure their cognition, motivation, and behavior according to the contextual features (Bandura, 2001; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Schunk, 2005; Zimmerman, 2002).

In the 21st century, self-directed learning is a method to engage learners in learning activities independently at their own pace and accountability. The learners hold an autonomous role in SDL, unlike in traditional learning settings whereby the teachers play the autocratic style in a classroom (Lounsbury et al., 2009). On the other hand, writing skills are one of the crucial skills in English. Writing skills are often tested and serve as part of the indicators in examination and assessment. Writing skills are also an essential element of communication, either for personal use, such as writing on social media, academic purpose, or professional means.

Background of the Study

This study recognized learners’ dependency on teacher instruction for writing tasks as the main element, showing a lack of own initiative and practice in English writing skills among learners. The lack of promotion and exposure of self-directed learning methods among secondary school students, also the active roles of teachers, parents, and peers in encouraging learners’ autonomous role in learning, remain underexplored in Malaysia. In response to the demand for a 21st-century education, teaching strategies that centered on students have been endorsed in many developed countries, highlighting the capabilities and attitudes of beyond content knowledge, namely: higher-order thinking, problem-solving skills, self-directed learning, teamwork, communication skills, planning and organizing skills, and self-management skills (Kaufman, 2013).

Malaysia aspires to become a developed nation (Bakar et al., 2020), but the country is still far from promoting self-directed learning and very dependent on rote learning in teacher-centered classes (Asfar & Zainuddin, 2015; Ibrahim et al., 2017; Peen & Arshad, 2017). The traditional methods used in schools at the recent time do not encourage students to become active and independent learners. Instead, it will produce a passive and dependent learner, implying that students should depend on the teachers for information, drill, and practice activities, as well as learn only for examination purposes (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2017). Some improvements are necessary to transform passive and traditional learning activities into an active and engaging learning experience to produce holistic students, not only in language learning and acquisition (Ibrahim & Adnan, 2020). Thus, providing ample opportunities and a conducive learning environment in Malaysia secondary school for students to take autonomous roles in their learning could be done by having collaboration or individual works by themselves, with some guidelines and instructions provided by the instructor or teachers.
Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide additional affirmation and support for the development of self-directed learning strategies to be widely implemented in educational institutions, particularly in secondary school. Boyer et al. (2017) endorsed self-directed learning as an alternative way of the learning experience and in the language context, to enhance language skills and acquisition of an individual, thus nurturing an autonomous method of learning in the 4th Industrial Revolution that works closely with the education field. The self-rating scale of self-directed learning developed by Williamson (2007) served as a guideline and instrument for this study, promoting self-directed learning awareness among teachers and learners on the possibilities and direction of self-directed learning. In the second questionnaire, English writing skills were selected as the element for improvement to ensure the result was more concise, visible, and specific.

In anticipation of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 as the guideline in Malaysia Educational transformation, self-directed learning is a fundamental element in developing a high-quality education system as practiced and promoted by a developed nation, such as Finland that holds the best education system in the world. Self-directed learning allows students to explore knowledge and learning experiences beyond examination purposes, empowering their leadership skills, bilingual proficiency, and cognitive skills, namely: critical thinking, reasoning, creative thinking, and innovation for becoming a competitive global resident (Knowles, 1975). Therefore, this research was fundamental to the educational system and worthy to be explored further.

Results from this study provided a better understanding of the levels of self-directedness among secondary school students and their readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills. Also, this study could provide more insights on how secondary school students can manipulate self-directed learning strategies in improving their English writing skill performance. As the students hold an autonomous role in deciding their own pace and self-directed learning strategies suitable for them, students can learn how to be responsible for their learning process. Nevertheless, teachers can provide students with lists of effective self-directed learning strategies for assisting them.

Literature Review

Autonomy and Language Learning

According to Littlewood (1996), an individual with autonomy is independent in making and performing the options that control their activities, dependent on two focal elements, ability and willingness. In this context, autonomy may imply our capability of thinking and acting independently to ensue in numerous situations, especially one that focuses on learning. Benson (2011) mentioned learner autonomy requires the learners to have more control of their learning process. This definition is also often associated in the recent work with the philosophical idea of personal autonomy, which involves those who strive for greater control over their lives.

However, it is likely to fuse autonomy with almost similar concepts. Benson (2007) stated most people agreed that either autonomy or autonomous learning is not equivalent to 'self-instruction,' 'self-access,' 'self-study,' 'self-education,' 'out-of-class learning,' or 'distance learning.' These terms explain various methods and levels of learning by oneself, which autonomy refers to skills and attitudes, or in other words, the ability to control their acquisition of knowledge or skills. The idea is that learning itself is not similar to being able to learn alone.
Other than that, to be autonomous learners, students need to acquire ways to control or ownership of their learning.

**Autonomy Elements**

Littlewood (1996) also added two focal elements in learning autonomy, which are ability and willingness. These two components are interchangeable in some situations, given that an individual might be able to induce their option independently with the absence of willingness, perhaps due to internal perception. The same goes for an individual who is willing to conduct an activity but cannot do so. Ability cares about acquiring knowledge on the alternate options and required skills in performing fitting choices. Willingness then is concerned with both motivation and confidence to be responsible for the option taken. Therefore, all these four fundamental elements must be present collectively for an individual to be autonomous effectively (Littlewood, 1996).

**Autonomy Stages**

Littlewood (1996) mentioned that autonomy operates on a hierarchy of various behavior levels whereby an independent individual renders their own decision. The low-level options regulate a particular process and encourage the execution of the activity situated at the bottom of the hierarchy. The high-level options manage general activity, whether to execute it, which is placed at the top of the hierarchy various behavior levels. For instance, the progression of growing autonomy in utilizing and acquiring a language is as follows:

- Students can make their grammar and vocabulary choices, which is the first step towards self-consultation, such as controlled role-plays and simple information exchange tasks,
- Students select their meaning and communication strategies to achieve their communication goals,
- Students can decide on goals, meanings, and strategies in greater depth, i.e., creativity, problem solve and talk,
- Students start to choose and form their learning contexts, such as in self-directed learning and project work,
- Students can take decisions in a situation whereby it is the traditional part of the educator, i.e., on materials and learning,
- Students take part in defining the nature and progress of their curriculum,
- Students can use language independently for communication & learning outside of the classroom in situations of choice.

Nunan (1996) developed a five-level model of the learners’ action, including awareness, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence. In all of these levels indicated the learners’ development activities order in language textbooks. At the awareness level, students will be connected to the pedagogical objectives and learning contents, identifying the strategic implications of pedagogical tasks, ideal styles, or learning strategies. Next, learners would associate the content of classroom learning with the real world. Although the model created by Nunan (1996) persisted in the language learning framework, the three-stage model of Littlewood (1996) comprised dimensions in language acquisition, the approach of learning, and personal development. In a language acquisition setting, autonomy includes the ability to independently work with the language in an actual and impulsive situation (autonomy as a communicator). In
classroom organization, students must be responsible for their learning (Adnan, 2018) and manage an active and individually relevant strategy (autonomy as a learner). In a wide range of settings, autonomy includes a universal individual with an upper-level goal (autonomy as a person).

**Autonomy Framework**

According to Littlewood (1996), three general autonomy domains can be further segregated into particular parts and serve as the foundation of developing realistic tactics:

- **Autonomy as a communicator** is established by the adeptness in using language in creative ways and also the adeptness in utilizing suitable tactics in imparting meaning in some situations,
- **Autonomy as a learner** is determined by the aptitude to take part in independent activities, for instance, self-directed learning, and also the aptitude to utilize suitable learning strategies, both inside and outside of the classroom,
- **Autonomy as a person** is influenced by the foreign language learning perspective, for instance, the aptitude in conveying respective meaning and the aptitude to come up with personal learning perspectives, such as outside classroom interaction.

**Distance Learning**

According to Moore and Kearsley (2011), distance learning enables people in geographically remote locations to have widespread access to learning opportunities. The study demonstrated different authors and researchers were using inconsistent definitions of distance education and distance learning over the past two decades. When computers were used for education, distance learning was usually associated with delivering content and instructional material via print and electronic media (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). Nonetheless, the interchangeableness of distance education and distance learning is very much opposed by King et al. (2001) as both terms are dissimilar. Distance learning is regarded as an ability, while distance education means learning at a distance or more on the activity inside the said ability. Yet, the differences between these terms are bounded by the dissimilarities in time and place (Clark, 2020).

**e-Learning**

The foundation of the term e-learning remains ambiguous, though it derived in the 1980s from other online teaching methods within the same timeframe. Some authors defined e-learning explicitly, while others suggested a specific e-learning definition or view in their articles. Some of these definitions materialized through conflicting opinions about other descriptions by comparing defining features with existing terms. Decades ago, Ellis (2004) disagreed with Nichols (2003), who described e-learning as being firmly accessible via technology tools in web-based, web-distributed, or web-capable formats. Ellis (2004) stated that e-learning includes content and instructions delivered through CD-ROMs, the Web, or an Intranet (Benson, 2011; Clark, 2020) and also comprises audio and videotape, satellite transmission, and interactive TV. Tavangarian et al. (2004) and Triacca et al. (2004) considered the technology as a descriptor was inadequate despite having technical characteristics included in its definition. Tavangarian et al. (2004) also incorporated the theoretical model of constructivism as a basis for the term by claiming that e-learning is more than just procedural since it can transform an individual’s experience into knowledge through the process of knowledge building.
Online Learning

Most authors described online learning as using technologies to access learning experiences (Benson, 2011; Huang, 2002). Other authors described online learning as mere online learning (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005), while others referred to the medium of technology or the learning context. Two decades ago, Benson (2011) and Huang (2002) identified online learning as the latest distance learning that enhances the availability of non-traditional and disadvantaged educational openings to learners. Other writers also discussed the accessibility of online learning and its linkage, flexibility, and capability in promoting wide-ranging interactions (Ally, 2004; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Hiltz and Turoff (2005) did not only evade the connection of online learning to distance learning and conventional delivery systems, but they also claimed online learning is a better version of distance learning. Like other authors, they believe that distance education or learning is related to online learning, but their descriptive narratives are still vague.

“MOOCs and their platforms, such as Coursera, edX and Udacity scale up traditional online courses for multiple learners by providing online video lectures, discussion forums, assessments, peer-evaluations, and exams graded automatically. However, the structure of many of these MOOCs is predominantly a teacher-centred approach. MOOCs differ from face-to-face courses as students can learn at their own pace, independently drive the learning process, and enable them to repeat or skip lessons” (Adnan & Ritzhaupt, 2018, p. 90).

Attitudes and Motivation in Learning English as Second Language

According to Spolsky (1969), attitude is an essential key factor contributing to Second Language (L2) learning accomplishment. Moreover, the students’ attitudes also determine to which extent the students continue to participate actively in the language learning process (Wu, 2008). Thus, there are two different forms of attitude concerning language learning, namely positive and negative. Many researchers found the benefits of positive behavior whereby L2 positive students have more advantages over negative attitudes (Littlewood, 1996; Spolsky, 1969). Therefore, this statement proved that the attitudes of students correspond positively to their performance in English. This claim was supported by a few opinions on the hindrance of negative attitudes towards L2 by Gardner and Lambert (1972) that contended students with negative attitudes towards L2 are likely unfriendly, ethnocentric, and put less effort in discussing L2. In placing more emphasis, Littlewood (1996) also bore the assumption that these students do not show an attempt to learn.

Although the importance of the English language is generally acknowledged, most Malaysian students show a lack of effort to learn English (Ibrahim & Adnan, 2020). A case study done by Razali (2017) recognized that the poor performers recognized the importance of English for instrumental purposes and took a positive view of its use, standard, and status but did not demonstrate positive attitudes towards language learning. Furthermore, students spent minimum effort to enhance their proficiency both inside and outside of the classroom.

In L2, motivation is crucial. There are two different types of motivation: namely intrinsic and extrinsic. According to Bandura (1977), intrinsic motivation is an inclusive orientation that denotes the wish of executing action without external incentives or rewards. On the other hand, Hennessey et al. (2015) stated that extrinsic motivation is typically related to the instrumental
guidance and the intention of learners to achieve an external recompense. Nonetheless, the connection between extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and performance was frail. Also, both extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation do not directly influence students’ English language performance. Apart from motivation, students’ attitudes have a significant impact on their performance in the language.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) believed that positive and highly motivated students are likely to be more successful than negative and unmotivated ones. To achieve the most effective language experience, both motivation and a positive attitude need to be synchronous. For instance, as a language learner, a student who possesses an encouraging attitude in language learning but less effort to learn cannot be a successful language learner. The same goes for those who have the motivation or desire for learning but are unwilling to learn (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

**Students and Writing Skills**

According to Ansarimoghaddam and Tan (2014), ESL scholars, educators, and instructors always emphasize that writing is an essential language skill. Flower and Hayes (1980) suggested that writing is a direct speech act of what the author means, their intellectual struggles, and interpretations. Razali (2017) also emphasized writing as an integrative skill, a major, productive, and complex learning process. Thus, writing can be defined as an effective learning process, starting from generating ideas and collecting necessary information until the final text is published. Hyland (2018) mentioned that writing is a way of communicating, confronting, and thinking because the author’s thoughts and writing are combined when the author begins to write. In terms of writing attitude, it is related to the students’ feelings and beliefs, including their writing abilities and written language tasks.

Razali (2017) examined students’ tendencies, beliefs, and myths of their writing practices and recognized that most students viewed writing as a product rather than a process. This statement is nearly unrelated or important to reading, exploring, and reflecting, or discerning new ideas. Students also perceived writing as a product of arbitrary grammar rules instead of a process based on the flow of thoughts and ideas (Ibrahim & Adnan, 2020). Many researchers carried out empirical studies on student writing (Zheng & Yu, 2019). Most studies revealed that students focused on how many phrases and pages they wrote instead of discovering new ideas. They did not promote controversial views and arguments but applied these in writing to abstract grammar rules. Conclusively, instead of learning to write creatively, they obeyed particular models of writing. Therefore, it is essential to offer students with abundant opportunities to practice writing.

**Error Analysis of the Written English Essays of Secondary School Students in Malaysia**

Darus and Subramaniam (2009) conducted an error analysis on essay samples from 72 ESL students in form four (16 years old) who completed their primary education in public schools. All participants had a similar educational background and went through ten years of primary and secondary education. The researchers identified the most frequent errors in essay samples. Singular/Plural form contributed to the highest errors committed, followed by Verb Tense, Word Choice, Prepositions, Subject-Verb Agreement, and Word Order. Other prominent
types of errors committed by the participants were Articles Error, Missing Space, Word Form, Spelling, Verb Form, Capitalization, Wrong/Misused Word, Redundancy, and Missing Word.

According to Darus and Subramaniam (2009), there were explanations behind every error done by the participants. For instance, in the Singular/Plural form, some participants failed to understand the rule for the countable plural noun should be applied with suffix ‘s.’ Some participants could not notice of the countable plural noun, but might unsure when the rule should be applied. This is might due to the absence of a plural marker for a noun in the Malay language. While in Verb Tense, the participants failed to apply the correct tense to the verb in a sentence. Some participants may be unaware of the various rules on the application of tenses. The uses of certain suffixes, such as ‘ing’ and tense forms from the past, showed that participants recognized the rules for different timing and assumed that these verbs must be used in different tense forms and not in a basic form. Some verbs were written using a variety of tenses and not in the fundamental form of the verb.

In Word Choice, the researchers believed that the participants possessed inadequate vocabulary. In the sample essay, a participant used the word ‘flour’ instead of ‘floor’ in the sentence, “Not washing and sweeping the flour every day makes the floor dirty.” Another participant selected the word ‘healthy’ instead of ‘safe’ in a sentence, “The workers should keep the canteen clean and healthy.” In another sample, a participant used the word ‘staff’ instead of ‘workers’ in a sentence, “This is due to the irresponsible attitude of the canteen staff.”

As for prepositions, some participants failed to establish the correct application of prepositions in a sentence. For instance, a participant used the preposition ‘at’ instead of ‘around’ in a sentence, “So many dirty plates and glasses can be seen everywhere at the school canteen.” While in the sentence, “The food to cater to the students during recess is not enough,” the appropriate preposition would be ‘for’ and not ‘to.’ Last but not least, in a sentence, “As the secretary at the club I have been assigned to write a report,” the participant should apply the preposition ‘of.’

Other than that, few participants had difficulties in constructing a simple or complex sentence. The English language possesses a rigid word order, namely as Subject-Verb-Object (SVO). Therefore, a complete sentence must begin with a subject, followed by a verb and an object (if necessary). In English, a complete sentence must comprise a minimum of a subject and a verb. The participants committed a few errors such as missing/wrong object, absence of subject and verb in their sentences. This kind of error produces sentences with vague and incomplete meanings.

In a nutshell, the study indicated that errors committed by the participants were fundamentally grammatical. They also have insufficient vocabularies that may contribute to their incomprehensible sentences at times. Moreover, from the mistakes committed in English sentence structure rules, it is understood that these participants might experience issues regarding standard English grammar rules acquisition so that they can focus on these types of errors.

**Self-Directed Learner**

The key features to describe self-directed learners are possessing a high degree of auto
efficiency, intrinsically motivated, recognizing the needs of their learning, placing objectives based on the analysis, deciding suitable strategies to achieve those objectives, assessing its goal based on internal evidence and external feedback, and ready to address new challenges (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Schunk, 2005). Knowles (1975) suggested self-managed learning is an approach where learners are motivated to undertake personal responsibility and build meaningful learning results in cognitive (self-management) and contextual (self-management) procedures.

The self-direction of the learner focuses on the desire or preference of the learner, or in other words, learning responsibility (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Peen and Arshad (2017) proposed factors that influence self-directed learning: self-effectiveness, conscientiousness, epistemological beliefs, and belief in internal control. A trained local facilitator may interview people with low self-directed learning indicator results to see if they need help with low self-efficacy, self-motivation, goals, and organization or evaluate their control locus. On-site educators and facilitators will need some training on how these students can be supported and assisted in increasing their self-efficiency, internal control, and autonomy. The aim of governing students' self-direction was to provide appropriate support, so they can start taking responsibility for their learning and completing the online courses and not impede access to online learning opportunities.

**Self-Directed Learning in Malaysia Education National Blueprint 2013-2025**

As time fast forward with the rapid increase of technology, the necessity of building first-class human capital in fulfilling the needs of today’s world is vital at its best. Therefore, a set of prominent and essential skills known as 21st Century Skills are the most sought-after skills that every individual should possess, regardless of professional, academic, or personal field. In education, children require skills, such as 3Rs, namely Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic, to cope with changing demands as they grow up. Many countries in the world realize the importance of including 21st Century Skills in their curriculum but 21st Century Skill is still underexplored. Nevertheless, Malaysia’s Ministry of Education believes that being assertive, self-directed learner, an active provider, and aware civilian as the outcomes guaranteed from a person with well-equipped 21st-century skills (Malaysia Education National Blueprint, 2013).

Ministry of Education Malaysia initiated the using the ICT model for providing efficient English instruction to students via the implementation of the 1BestariNet system. This personalized learning was accustomed to individual needs and highly accessible (Malaysia Education National Blueprint, 2013). Self-directed learning is not only for students but also for improving teachers’ proficiency in English, especially for those who possess poor English language proficiency and are incompetent. Teachers should attend an English training course for four hours a week for 44 weeks without affecting school hours or teaching and learning sessions. Teachers also need to undergo an intensive English training course, an eight-week immersion program, and eight-week self-learning courses. The self-learning course comes in modules and is a computer-based program where teachers need to conduct self-directed learning for 30 hours per week.

**Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research method that involved two sets of questionnaires. The first questionnaire aimed to examine students’ level of self-directedness,
while the second questionnaire sought to investigate students’ readiness for SDL in improving English writing skills.

**Participants**

The questionnaires were given to 50 randomly selected Form 4 students aged 16 years old. Form 4 students were likely to have acquired better and richer English language experience and motivation than the younger ones. The age and the maturity of the participants played crucial roles in this study and its finding. Wan et al. (2014) selected a final year student cohort in their research as they believed the participants were likely to have more linguistic competence and motivation than younger students. Knowles (1975) suggested that as individuals grow, they possess an accumulated reservoir of experiences that can use them as a learning resource.

**Instrument**

There were two sets of instruments used to fulfill the research objectives. The first questionnaire was Williamson’s (2007) self-rating scale of self-directed learning, which contained 60 items with 12 questions from five different sections, namely awareness, learning strategies, learning activities, evaluation, and interpersonal skills. The response keys are as follows: 5=Always, 4=Often, 3=Sometimes, 2=Seldom, and 1=Never. There were three categories of the results: low, medium, and high levels of self-directedness.

The second questionnaire comprised ten questions (Yes/No) about students’ readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills. These inventories helped understand students’ willingness to incorporate self-directed learning strategies as one of the efforts to enhance their English writing skills. Both questionnaires include demographic questions for extracting information on respondents’ gender, age, and race for reporting purposes.

**Data Collection**

The questionnaires took about 10 minutes to complete via an online survey tool. The online tool allowed participants to enter their inputs directly into the system. Also, an online survey tool enabled the researchers to collect and generate data swiftly, saving time and cost-effectiveness. The researchers welcomed any further questions by the participants via WhatsApp and Telegram. The correlation analysis was conducted by using the information obtained from the survey and the self-directed learning portfolio to answer the research questions as follows:

Q1. What are the levels of self-directedness of form four students?

Q2: Is there any relationship between students’ level of self-directness in the learning process and their readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills?

The null hypothesis colligated with the above questions as follows:

H02 – There is no significant relationship between students’ level of self-directness in the learning process with their readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills?

**Data Analysis**

All data obtained from the survey were first analyzed using a spreadsheet to gain the total marks from both questionnaires, respectively. For the first questionnaire, all responses were summed up and matched to their levels of self-directedness, such as low, medium, and high. As
for the second questionnaire, each ‘Yes’ response carried 10% of the scores, whereas a ‘No’ response carried 0%. The total scores indicated the score of readiness for students in using self-directed learning for improving English writing skills. The maximum score would be 100%. The mean, median, and mode for participants with medium and high levels of self-directedness were further analyzed using IBM-SPSS 2016 statistical software. The correlation between students’ level of self-directedness and students’ readiness for levels of self-directedness in improving English writing skills was analyzed using Pearson Correlation.

Results
A total of 50 students (form 4) from a secondary school in Semenyih, Selangor, Malaysia, participated in this research. The majority of the respondents were female students, which made up 68% of the total respondents, followed by male students by 32%. Most of the respondents were Malay with 56%, followed by Chinese with 32%, Indian with 10%, and Sikh with 2%.

![Figure 1. The level of self-directedness](image)

This study adopted a questionnaire from Williamson’s Self-Rating Scale of Self-Directed Learning (2007) for the first part of the survey. 46% of the participants scored a high level of self-directedness, with 54% scoring at a moderate level of self-directedness. 0% recorded for a low level of self-directedness. This result showed that the participants were self-directed learners that require more exposure and guidance on self-directed learning strategies.

Williamson (2007) stated that those with a moderate level of self-directedness are already halfway from becoming self-directed learners. However, they need to recognize and evaluate a few areas for improvement, and some strategies might need to be adopted together with a teacher’s guidance if necessary. Those with a high level of self-directedness may need to maintain their progress by finding effective and suitable methods to strengthen their self-directed learning. Williamson (2007) also added that no matter which level of self-directedness scores, they still need to pay more attention to the items scored 1-Never and 2-Seldom to improve one’s self-directed learning.
The second questionnaire consisted of 10 Yes/No questions regarding students’ readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills. All items received a higher percentage of Yes response and a relatively good mean score. This result showed that most participants were willing and ready to use self-directed learning in improving their English writing skills.

Table 1. Students’ readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you familiar with Self-Directed Learning (SDL) strategies?</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are you interested to learn on how to use Self-Directed Learning in improving your English writing skills?</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are you ready to learn on how to use Self-Directed Learning in improving your English writing skills?</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are you ready to practice Self-Directed Learning strategies in improving your English writing skills once you have learnt about them?</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are you willing to go for a workshop on how to use Self-Directed Learning (SDL) strategies in improving English writing skills if any?</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are you going to promote Self-Directed Learning strategies to your family and friends if it is proven to improve your English writing skills?</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. At this point, do you have a positive impression towards Self-Directed Learning strategies in improving your English writing skills</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you expect to experience positive English writing skill learning process with Self-Directed Learning strategies?</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you prefer to have a teacher as your facilitator to facilitate your Self-Directed Learning in English writing skills?</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are you hoping for a better English writing skills after practicing Self-Directed Learning strategies after certain period?</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing on two items with the highest mean scores, item 1 with a mean score of 1.26: *Are you familiar with Self-Directed Learning strategies?* 74% of the participants were familiar with self-directed learning concepts. Another 26% of the participants were not familiar with these learning strategies. This information was significant for educators, allowing them to plan introductory courses for self-directed learning since they can manipulate the concepts for improving student learning experience and skills, such as English writing skills. The strategies are very crucial to encourage students’ interest in using self-directed learning.

Next item with the highest mean score of 1.34, item 5: *Are you willing to go for a workshop on how to use Self-Directed Learning strategies in improving English writing skills if any?*
any? This item scored the highest No responses than others since this might be because the students feel reluctant to join other programs that are not compulsory and contributes to their attendance.

Table 2. *The relationship between the level of self-directedness and students’ readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level_of_Self_Directedness</th>
<th>Readiness_Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>73.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>85.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 showed students with a high level of self-directedness displayed higher readiness scores than those with a moderate level of self-directedness. Additionally, there was a slight difference in the mean scores of the readiness between the two groups, High, with 85.22%, and Moderate, with 73.70%. Moreover, the minimum and maximum scores for high-level self-directedness were higher than the moderate level as it scored min 50%; max 100% compared to the moderate ones with min 30%; max 90%.

Table 3. *Correlation between level of self-directedness and readiness score*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Level of Self Directedness</th>
<th>Readiness_Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.296*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table 3 showed a weak positive linear relationship and significance between the level of self-directedness in learning and students’ readiness for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills \[r=.296, n=50, p<0.05\]. Thus, there was a possibility that the higher the level that one’s scored in self-directedness in learning, the higher the readiness score would be.

**Discussion**

Findings revealed that secondary school students possessed different self-directedness levels. Most students were not aware of self-directedness and were not exposed explicitly to how to conduct self-directed learning systematically. With the increasing access to technological tools and online educational materials at their fingertips, students can find information and do not need to wait for materials and further instruction from a teacher in a classroom. For instance, students may browse the internet to search for a sample of formal letter essays before examination without being instructed by the teacher. The motivations and attitudes of students in learning English as a second language can be nurtured through the introduction of self-directed learning strategies. They can learn how to adapt strategies such as flexibility, space, time, and pace to master English language skills, including reading skills, writing skills, listening skills, and speaking skills to acquire particular language components as grammar rules and vocabulary.

These findings could be linked to the two focal elements in learning autonomy as suggested by Littlewood (1996), namely, ability and willingness. Ability cares about acquiring knowledge on the alternate options and required skills in performing fitting choices. Willingness is concerned with the acquisition of motivation and confidence to be responsible for the option taken. Thus, all these elements must be present collectively for an individual to be autonomous effectively. Since none of the participants scored a low level of self-directedness, this was apparent evidence that secondary school students have the self-directedness drive embedded in themselves. However, it requires further action to ensure that self-directed learning happens consistently and systematically.

**Implications to the Students**

By acknowledging the level of self-directedness, students can address their strengths, weaknesses, and preference in learning. All items in the first questionnaire enabled students to gain a better understanding of conducting self-directed learning. Self-directed learning also allows students to take ownership of their learning process. They might experience fear and anxiety of having to direct their learning at the beginning of the process. Spolsky (1969) suggested that attitude is an essential key factor contributing to L2 learning accomplishment, while Wu (2008) believed that students’ attitudes determine to which extent the students continue to participate actively in the language learning process.

Not to mention, some might feel inadequate without formal instruction from an expert like a teacher. Therefore, the systematic introduction of self-directed learning to students at a young age would enable them to familiarize themselves with the necessary steps for a successful self-directed learning experience and strategies over time. According to Ibrahim et al. (2017), students experienced a positive transformation from feeling uncertain to being confident and skillful in self-direction accompanied by the teacher’s support towards the end of the journey.
Implications to the Educator and Education Policy Makers

By getting information on students’ level of self-directedness in learning, educators and education policymakers can gain more insights on how to develop instructional materials accordingly (Adnan & Ritzhaupt, 2018). Thus, educators and education policymakers can accommodate students’ needs and support by formulating their mindful endeavors to improve themselves. Other than that, the educators can recognize the students’ areas of deficits in learning and offer assistance according to their independence or dependence on learning by considering students’ necessity (Williamson, 2007).

The positive relationship between the levels of self-directedness and students’ readiness score for self-directed learning in improving English writing skills will allow the education policymakers to address critical components in constructing the scheme of work for English subjects, particularly in writing skills. Therefore, the educators are responsible for building students’ full aptitude for successful self-directed learning by supporting each other via congruent teamwork.

Moreover, the items listed in the second questionnaire will allow the educator to plan suitable ways to nurture students’ interest in developing their self-directed learning potentials. For instance, in item 5, students are willing to attend a workshop on self-directed learning to improve their self-directed learning skills and strategies, although this item recorded the highest ‘No’ responses compared to others. Nevertheless, the educators could arrange a self-directed learning workshop for the students based on the responses received in the second questionnaire. Also, item 9 enquired whether students prefer to have a teacher as a facilitator in guiding their self-directed learning, and most of them agreed with the statement. Therefore, educators can act as facilitators to assist a group of students in a self-directed learning group.

Conclusion

In-depth and further understanding of students’ level of self-directedness in learning will provide massive advantages for educators and students (Adnan et al., 2020; Hashim et al., 2020). Congruent teamwork between teachers and students will ensure a successful self-directed learning experience in improving students’ English writing skills. Self-directed learning strategies are not only limited to a certain level of learning and education but are also highly applicable for lifetime learning. Moreover, self-directed learning promotes lifelong effects of positive attributes towards learning experiences such as becoming more disciplined, attentive, responsible, and creative in planning one’s learning objectives.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia [GPK-P&P-2020-007] and [GGPM-2018-072].

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References


ESL Students’ Readiness for Self-Directed Learning

Adnan & Sayadi


Reading Difficulties in English as a Second Language in Grade Five at a Saint Patrick’s High School for Boys, Hyderabad- India

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Abstract
Reading is one of the essential components of the English language. Countries that use English as a second language (ESL) sometimes have difficulties in reading and comprehension. According to many researches, mother tongue has proved some interferences with learning a second language. This study investigated the results of reading difficulties of young second language learners in terms of accuracy, comprehension, and rate using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability test. The study was carried out in one of the High Schools for Boys in Hyderabad, India and included Grade five, aged 10-12 years. In order to understand the reading difficulties of English as a second language, a qualitative approach was employed. Interview, reading tests, and observation were conducted as a data collection tool. The findings showed that these subjects had no specific language impairments but they had different degrees of language exposure and usage that led to poor accuracy, comprehension, and reading rate during reading English language texts. Five students (50%) were classified at a low level of readers, three (30%) at a high level, and two (20%) at a mild level after evaluation of their compatibility between their chronological and reading age. It is suggested that the teachers should first assess students who struggle in reading accuracy and comprehension and then assist them with their language learning and acquisition that take place at school and home.

Keywords: Reading difficulties, young learners, poor accuracy, Neale Analysis of Reading Ability test, English as a Second Language

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.34
Introduction

Reading in any language plays an essential role in our educational system and social lives. The reading process is the avenue for other English functions such as writing, vocabulary identification, use, grammar advancement, and excellent spelling (Chandran & Shah, 2019, p.3372).

Reading skill differs from listening and speaking. It is the most essential skill among the four language skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading as it can improve the overall language proficiency (Krashen & Brown, 2007). It is also associated with an individual’s success as it helps them comprehend written or printed materials that help them in their professional engagements and interactions. Countries that use English as a second language (ESL) sometimes have difficulties reading and comprehension.

Reading comprehension is not just realizing or understanding of individual words when our eyes pass over them. Instead, all comprehension models emphasize the need for readers to build up a mental representation of text, a process that requires integration across a range of sources of information from lexical features to knowledge concerning events in the world (Garnham, 2001; Gernsbacher, 1990).

Reading, understanding, and comprehension of the second language, especially English, pose a great challenge to the learners, teachers, and parents since young learners may lack required exposure to the proper enabling environment, social milieu, and peers well-versed in linguistic abilities. Nature and nurture play their part in creating reading and other linguistic skills in young learners with English as a second language (ESL). Nurture and socialization play a predominant role in overcoming ESL learning barriers in young children.

Across the world, a second language (other than mother tongue) is acquired through Reading in classrooms, often without any exposure to English outside it. In India also, a child acquires efficiency in ESL, the second language, generally through socialization and in classrooms. Therefore, oral proficiency may not be a good predictor of reading comprehension, and speech ability in the ESL context in India, where students learn a second language through reading rather than speaking. Most of the students start speaking English only after five years of exposure to English, whereas they start reading and writing their mother tongue fluently by this time. “These children thus confront with the task of learning to read in a language that they have yet to master orally. Because reading instruction strongly builds on oral language proficiency, second-language speaking children may therefore experience a considerable gap.” (Droop and Verhoeven, 2003: 78)

This study aimed to determine the reading difficulties of young second language learners in terms of accuracy, comprehension and reading speed in one of the High Schools for Boys in Hyderabad, India. It also investigated if these difficulties were due to a lack of proper English language exposure or genetic language impairments. This study posed three primary research questions:

1. What are the language and literacy backgrounds of the learners?
2. What are the observations of learners’ reading performance using NARA test?
3. What tendency could be observed about learners’ reading performance based on the test?

Literature Review

It is very important to evaluate critically the reading difficulties of a child, i.e. elements behind a child's slow and inaccurate reading and writing skills, possible problems encountered in reading comprehension both in L1 and L2 levels, especially the English language. A learner needs to be given sufficient time to learn English as a second language so that one can realize one’s full potential in linguistic and academic development.

Some of the difficulties experienced in ESL countries come from various factors that are beyond human control. According to Chandran & Shah (2019, p.3372), problems in reading and comprehension emanate from environmental, instructional, and biological sources. These causes mean that the surrounding that one is born and brought up determines their ease of grasping new languages and, in this case, English.

Similarly, the modes of instruction that one receives at an early age or during their growth determine their ability to grasp reading and comprehension. Lastly, the combination of the biological parents determines the origin of a person. It would ascribe one to a specific genetic makeup that either makes them easy to learn languages or not.

Another difficulty that ESL learners face is because of the setup of the English language. The words in English can be ambiguous and of unfamiliar vocabulary to countries that use it as a second language (Mohammed & Rashid, 2017, p.429). Also, these learners have limited time to cognitively process texts presented to them and output the required responses, especially when around natives. Some of the other sources originate from the wrong pronunciation of words due to ethnicity, encountering new words, not understanding the meaning of the words, and poor reading habits (Mohammed & Rashid, 2017, p.427). Looking at these scenarios, ESL students would need more time and commitment to understand and read English to use it around others.

Young learners are usually presented with the opportunity of strengthening their reading skills from an early age. At this age, the students still struggle with decoding phonetic knowledge, word recognition, and comprehension (Sardor, Oyshajon, & Rushana, 2020, p.76). As a result, the students disengage themselves from reading tasks, have lowered self-confidence in reading new words, are frustrated in simple reading tasks, and are discouraged by their lack of success.

India is a multilingual country; it adopted twenty-two official languages and boasts of having the world’s second-highest (780) number of languages, after Papua New Guinea (839 speeches). The English language holds a prominent place in India. English is one of the principal languages in private schools right from kindergarten onwards. The government of India has the policy to provide school education to the children, usually through the mother tongues and the official languages of the states or union territories. Therefore, English was taught as a “subject” in the “regional-medium” schools throughout the country. Tarinayya highlighted the importance and popularity of learning English in children in the statement: “India - where every school-going child has to be taught English....” (Amritavalli, 2001, p. 216). English was introduced as a
second or third language between the 4th and 7th years, depending on the policy of individual states of the Indian republic.

National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), in a study conducted in 2003, found that ESL was introduced in class I or class III in 26 states/union territories while only seven states/union territories introduced it as late as in class IV or class V.

In fact, young learners across India, i.e., children aged 7-11 years, start learning English as a foreign or second language at the very beginning of their formal education, viz. age up to seven years (Enever, 2009; Graddol, 2006; Savić, 2013). It is not important matter for children in India to read in a language or languages that they speak in their homes. They may learn to read in a language they do not yet know to speak, let alone understand. (Elley, 2001) described this situation clearly:

Children in developing countries face multiple handicaps in learning to read (…) Children in most developing countries expected to become literate in a non-native language or dialect. Whereas the majority of children in (the developed, GR) countries have the luxury of learning to read and write in their mother tongue, those in most African, South American, South Asian and Oceanic schools are struggling to cope with English, (…) or some other metropolitan language, usually a legacy of earlier colonial masters. This challenge of acquiring literacy in a second language (…) is true for most developing countries. (p.128)

**Neale Analysis of Reading Ability- second Edition (NARA II)**

The Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA) is a verbal reading test like a question-answer type test for children in the age range of six to twelve years usually. Children read aloud six short stories of increasing difficulty. Any errors by the children are corrected by the tester, and the required time to read English passages is noted. After each story, comprehension-based questions are asked to know the understanding of the learners. Some of the questions may be answered using verbatim memory, while others may require help and intervention by the tester.

The testers should terminate NARA test when the learner completes reading all six passages or when they find it too tough to continue. It depends on the number of reading errors committed. Separate standard scores and reading-chronological age equivalent scores are generated for text reading accuracy, reading comprehension, and reading speed.

The latter is measured by timing the passages read and converting this into words per minute over the total number of passages read. Hill, Long, Douglas, Tobin & Grimley (2005), in their study, found that the NARA test classifies reading errors into six categories: substitutions, refusals, additions, omissions, mispronunciations, and reversals. The tester can stop the evaluation of the learner at anytime if a child commits more than twelve errors in a given text. If a child commits more than sixteen errors in any single passage, the test stands discontinued immediately, and all six passages are not asked to be read. Furthermore, when administrating a reading ability test, optimal conditions can be suggested.
The test is administered in a peaceful place devoid of any distractions and interruptions to the children. It is preferring to use NARA in the oral reading test on account of the following reasons:

1. The results obtained by using NARA enable the assessor to select appropriate reading materials suited to the ability of individual students;
2. NARA allows monitoring the adoption of particular reading skills and helps to formulate specific intervention strategies;
3. NARA provides standard age scores, reading ages, and important information for proper evaluation of linguistic skills in young learners.

Methods

This study was qualitative research, which enabled the researchers to generate the data documenting the students’ language, literacy profiles, and reading performance through interviews, reading tests, and observation. The study was conducted in Saint Patrick’s High School for Boys, Hyderabad- India. This school had more than 2,000 students on its roll. Two researchers visited the school before administering the actual test to be familiar with the location, facilities, authorities, infrastructure, and administration of the school. The test was conducted on alternate days of the week.

Participants

Based on the researchers’ request, the school principal provided ten children having different levels of English proficiency (good, medium, poor) as the subjects of the study. They were all male students of Grade five, age between10-12 years. The examination was administered for two days; each testing day had one researcher examining five student samples. Another researcher helped in managing the administrative necessities and running the research procedure as per study design.

Instrument

To determine the reading difficulties of young second language learners who had different native language backgrounds, both researchers designed a semi-structured interview, a set of NARA II test booklets (the test manual), assessment forms, notes book, pencil, audio recorder, a stopwatch, and observation as a data collection tool. The data was analyzed qualitatively.

Procedure and Materials

In the pre-reading stage, as it is shown in figure (1) below, the researchers welcomed the participants to enter the experiment place − a quiet, free from distraction and interruption room − one after another. The researcher commenced the test through opening small discussions with the participants. Questions were asked before start reading such as talking about their favorite hobbies, personal information, kind of spoken language at home and school, and literacy backgrounds. The pre-reading stage was done as a warm-up exercise. The data were documented in a pre-printed student profile form.
Figure 1. Test administration process

Friendly atmosphere was created during the test to ensure that the participants have no inhibitions and have a free and frank discussion. More clarifications and explanations were given to the participants to clear any ambiguity concerning the test so they become more interactive and feel free perplexed.

As this test was taken by considerably young learners, before proceeding with the reading session, the tester gave obvious and pressure-free instructions to ensure that the students know the test procedure, feel comfortable, and do their best during the test. For instance, “Look at the picture and then read the story to me. If you come across a hard word, try reading it yourself before I help you. I am going to record the time it takes you to read, but it is more important to read carefully and remember what you read. In the end, I shall ask you some questions, so try to remember the story as you read it”.

A set of Neale Analysis of Reading Ability-second edition (NARA II) was used in the initial test, which provided test administration guidelines, practice and reading passages and two other forms, namely Diagnostic Tutor Form and the Supplementary Diagnostic Tests Form. As per the set guidelines, the researchers began facilitating the test by allowing the students to read a practice passage. Several practice passages in the test book were classified by age; thus, the suitable passage was picked above 7-year-olds.

Figure 2. Illustration of the passages in NARA II test book
As part of the participant’s assessment, six reading passages were prepared to read orally by them. See appendix (A) - table 1.

While students read the texts, testers had to multitask the instructions and record everything that was going on. The students start reading the practice passage and deciding on which level of actual reading they were (the better result of students’ practice passage reading, the higher level they could start their actual reading passage reading from), noting down students’ classified reading errors, namely words: mispronunciations, substitutions, refusals, additions, omissions, reversals in the Diagnostic Tutor Form and Supplementary Diagnostic Tests Form, making notes of students’ answers to the comprehension questions in each passage, writing down the time taken by students to complete the test, and deciding when to stop testing them.

The tester decides to stop the test once the students feel hesitated several times or committed many errors; thus it was not necessary for all students to finish reading the whole passages. In the NARA II, every inaccuracy in reading was counted as an error and recorded in the individual record. The categorization of errors was classified during and after students’ reading. The classification included: mispronunciations, substitutions, refusals, additions, omissions, and reversals. Hesitations and self-corrections were not a part of errors.

According to the allotted time required for the students to read every passage, the time was recorded from the first to the last. After that, the tester asked the students comprehension-based questions as soon as they finished reading the passage. They were encouraged to answer questions in their own words. Ten to twelve seconds of pause was compensated before they responded to the questions; when they did not, the tester asked the following question without answering the previous one. The tester decides to terminate the test in case the students exceed the maximum number of errors per level. The errors were 16-20 errors for level seven, without giving any comprehension questions after duly recording time spent and the number of errors made.

The tester made several interruptions, such as prompting the correct word when the students kept on reading the text while reading a word wrongly. The tester also helped the student to recite the word correctly when he was reading hesitate or attempting to decode phonetically but failed within five to seven seconds. The test session was shortly closed after one student finished with the passages reading. The tester had five minutes interval to scan all the recorded data and check whether the answers were completed or not. Then another student was called for conducting a similar test.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Primary sources for data collection included (a) Interview with the school principal to collect information about school and students, (b) Interview with the students to collect their personal information, and (c) Observation on students’ passages, reading tests to garner specific information on students’ reading achievements, and their comprehension and accuracy issues. The tools used in this study included a set of NARA II test booklets (the test manual), assessment forms, notes, a pencil, and a stopwatch. The data was analyzed qualitatively by cross-referencing all the findings in each phase of the data collection.
Students’ Profile
The highlighted areas of students’ language background and reading performance extracted were clarified in the appendix (B) - table (2) which were extracted from the research study. The pre-reading stage provided the information on the ten tested subjects.

Results and Discussion
The study results surprisingly revealed that the school was attended by students with varied native language backgrounds, with English, Telugu, and Urdu being the most common languages even though they did not project dominancy. These three languages are also equally exposed by mass media such as newspapers and TV programs. At home, most students spoke both native and English languages, whereas, at school, they spoke English and probably the native language with their teachers and their school friends who might have the same local language. The fact that they studied in English medium school where Telugu is the native language. The national language of their country is Hindi which mirrors a piquant situation in which students shared almost equal struggle in terms of their language learning and acquisition.

Students with English as their mother tongue might have a little more ease when it came to learning. At school, English was taught through speaking and writing. Students were supposed to excel with similar competency in English depending on how committed they were performing their academic learning.

Learners’ Reading Performance
The observation through a series of tests produced a record of students’ reading errors, comprehension, and reading speed. Both appendix (C) - tables (3) and appendix (D) - table (4) provide information about the level of reading performance of students in three areas. They include also examples of a student’s error archiving.

Level Achievement
Out of ten students, only three could cover reading all the levels. Two students read to L5 and two others read to L4, while three students stopped only at Level three. Based on the observation, SH, the least achiever on Day one of the test, read the passages very fast. He was the fastest reader though he was not the best performer in both accuracy and comprehension. He committed many errors such as omissions and deleted or missed a few words. This means that quick reading may lead to reading inaccuracy and a lower level of comprehension. A contrary situation was experienced on Day two by JA, who stopped at the same Level as SH where his termination at Level four was in parallel with the fact that he was the slowest reader among all the participants. Meanwhile, TC, the student with maximum languages exposure and use (Sathri, English, Hindi, and Telugu), read the texts very carefully but performed poorly at reciting and comprehending of text.

Level Difficulty
The average points for the number of errors, correct answers, and the time spent to read were generated to identify the degree of difficulty of the passages. The level was determined from a lower to a higher level in a linear pattern as per the testing-set criteria. The following chart showed the difficulty movement from level to level:
According to the graphs above which show the movement of difficulty in terms of accuracy, comprehension, and rate especially in level (four, five, six), students found that most difficulty was in decoding and reading passages. However, the fact that more questions at higher levels were harder to answer indicates that lower-level passages had been more understandable than higher-level ones. Similarly, lower-level passages took a shorter time to read, and this trend continued throughout the levels.

In this study, it is also noticed that the difficulty movements for the contexts of comprehension and rate projected a proportional leap which means that in terms of comprehension, Level two was more comprehensible than Level three, Level three was more comprehendible than Level four, and so forth. In contrast, in terms of rate, students took a longer time to read the passage of Level two than that of Level one and took longer of Level three than that of Level two and so forth. Meanwhile, the accuracy factor across the passages drew non-linear progress; students made more inaccuracy mistakes in Level four than in Level five and also in Level five than in Level six.

The findings suggest that accuracy challenges among Level four, Level five, and Level six passages had not mirrored the nature of the NARA II test design. The other reason could be the case of students’ background language interference in which vocabularies used in Level four and Level five had more complexion to cater than in Level five and Level six for Indian second language learners. If that was right, revision of passage composition is of primary recommendation.

Based on the comparison between the chronological age and reading age as shown in appendix (E) - table (5), students (TC, JA, PO, PR, NA, and SS) underperformed the test, with an exception for PO’s and SS’s reading which was classified as ideal one. Unique treatment should be given for students (PR, NA, and SS) as both their accuracy and comprehension were approximately three years behind ideality. SH was surprisingly being the fastest reader among all the participants. He displayed his reading accomplishment though his accuracy still need a significant improvement. Results of other students: NP, AJP, and SI were awe-inspiring as NP & SI passed the test well, however, AJP failed to pass the test because he did not attempting the minimum number of questions.
It is to be noticed that the majority of the subjects (8:2) showed quality of their performance on both word recognition processes and reading comprehension processes. Therefore, there is a strong tendency between the development of learners’ accuracy and comprehension that are likely to go hand in hand in the context of reading activities. Moreover, cross-referencing students’ score achievement with their language and literacy profile, gives enough testimony that students who use two active languages (SI, AJP, NP) have more potential than those with more active languages (SS, NA). It could also be due to the use of two languages which one of them might be used limitedly with family members and few people as the case in student (PR). Finally, to recap students’ rapport while taking the whole test, figure (3) below illustrates the individual reading achievement in the form of the simple view of reading diagram.

The findings of the study refer clearly that these children with reading difficulties, especially in the elementary schools had no specific language impairments but they had different degrees of language exposure that led to poor accuracy, comprehension, and reading rate. The findings also proved the shyness of these students while reading passages in English language in front of their peers and teachers. Therefore, their situation became complicated and further aggravated the learning deficit of the students in respect of the second language.
showed that the difficult aspects which need improvement in priority varied from student to another. The ratio of passing the NARA II reading test, based on comparing their chronological and reading age, was 3:2:5 for good, mild, and poor achievers, respectively.

These findings highlight the need for more frequent exposure to and use of English in increasing the ability to read accurately, comprehensibly, and fluently. Other difficulties encountered were that the participants did not recognize mistakes like omissions, substitutions, and mispronunciation, which adversely affected the participants’ comprehension and accuracy levels. According to the findings, the recommendations below were made:

i) At schools in general, teachers need to provide solutions such as giving unique treatments to low performers or changing their approaches of teaching, i.e. reading.
ii) More research using the NARA II reading test need to be conducted with multiple illiteracies, language, gender, and other backgrounds of the learners.
iii) Parents should share their responsibilities to ensure the learning process of their children. They should encourage them to read different materials such as stories and science fiction in their free time to improve their reading. Besides, bring their children to school at a younger age to encourage their abilities development in writing and reading.

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References


Appendixes

Appendix A

Table 1. Details of six main reading passages in NARA II test book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of passage</th>
<th>Level of each passage</th>
<th>Number of words in each passage</th>
<th>Number of comprehension questions in each passage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road Safety</td>
<td>level 2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fox</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B

Table 2. Students’ language and literacy background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Other spoken languages</th>
<th>Language exposure and use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>10,04</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Hindi, Telugu (passive)</td>
<td>- spoke English to family members and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- spoke English and Hindi with friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- watched cartoons and news in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- read book, stories, and newspapers in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>11,08</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>English (equally used as his Urdu)</td>
<td>- spoke in English and Urdu with family and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Language(s) Spoken at Home</td>
<td>Language(s) Spoken at School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>10,04</td>
<td>Sathri (Marathi-Hindi)</td>
<td>English, Telugu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH</td>
<td>10,07</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>English, Telugu (passive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJP</td>
<td>10,09</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>English, Telugu (passive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA</td>
<td>10,01</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>10,08</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>English, Hindi (passive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>10,07</td>
<td>Konkani</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>10,03</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>English, Telugu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>10,06</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>English, Hindi (passive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C

#### Table 3. Students’ reading performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Initial name</th>
<th>No. Of Errors</th>
<th>No. Of Correct Answers</th>
<th>Time Spent to Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>L3</td>
<td>L4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SI</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>TC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>AJP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>JA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>PO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total average</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

### Appendix D

#### Table 4. Level-wise analysis of sample of error typologies of the students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mispronunciations</th>
<th>Substitutions</th>
<th>Refusals</th>
<th>Additions</th>
<th>Omissions</th>
<th>Reversals</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td></td>
<td>seems (seemed)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>dinghi (dinghy)</td>
<td>mountenless (motionless)</td>
<td>Driving (diving) followed (following) driver (diver)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Kell (Kells) bubble (bubbles)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td>frisis (feats)</td>
<td>alightning (alighting)</td>
<td>expenditures (expeditions)</td>
<td>skrit (skirted)</td>
<td>sin (scent) responsibility (responsibilitie s) too (through) an (the)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>back (backs) pursuer (pursuers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L6</td>
<td>considerable (considerable)</td>
<td>rigyeres (rigorous)</td>
<td>flending (fledglings)</td>
<td>yunnering (unnering)</td>
<td>swallowed (swallows) itself (instead) was (with)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>season (seasonal) journey (journeys) … (it) easter (easterly)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix E

#### Table 5. Students’ score summary in relation to their chronological age and reading age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Chronological Age</th>
<th>Reading Age</th>
<th>Standardized Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab World English Journal</td>
<td><a href="http://www.awej.org">www.awej.org</a></td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSN: 2229-9327</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>10:04</td>
<td>10:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>11:08</td>
<td>12:10+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>10:04</td>
<td>9:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH</td>
<td>10:07</td>
<td>8:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJP</td>
<td>10:09</td>
<td>12:10+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA</td>
<td>10:01</td>
<td>8:04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>10:08</td>
<td>7:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>10:07</td>
<td>7:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>10:03</td>
<td>7:04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>10:06</td>
<td>7:11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Effectiveness of Gallery Run Technique on Saudi EFL Upper-Intermediate Students’ Speaking Skill: Learners’ Attitudes in Focus

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Received: 11/23/2021 Accepted: 12/24/ 2021 Published:12/27/2021

Abstract
Gallery Run (GR) is a classroom-based dynamic learning technique that promotes higher-order thinking and co-operative learning. This research study examined the influence of GR strategy on Saudi upper-intermediate English as a foreign language(EFL) learners’ oral skills. First off, 62 upper-intermediate EFL learners from a language school in Riyadh were opted and randomly sectioned into an experimental group and a control group. Then, the participants in the two groups were given a speaking pretest. The experiment group applied the GR technique in their classroom, whereas the control group received no treatment and continued with an ordinary classroom program. After two-month classes, a speaking posttest was given to the two groups. To analyze the data collected, Independent and Paired Samples T-tests were conducted. The results showed that the experimental group excelled and outperformed the control group. The results also showed that 25.8% and 48.3% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the GR technique enhanced their self-dependence. Furthermore, 45% of the participants reported that the ambiance was delightful, which conduced to the amelioration of their speaking competence. Another significant result was that 61.2% and 19.3% of the learners strongly agreed and agreed respectively that GR reduced the levels of loneliness and social anxiety. Furthermore, %58.1 strongly agreed that the GR technique did not put them under any kind of stress, nor did it encourage social loafing. A final finding reported by the 48.4 % of the learners was that GR reduced their alexithymia, social anxiety, and self-monitoring.

Keywords: co-operation-based strategies, energetic learning, Gallery Run Technique, Saudi EFL, speaking skills

Introduction

Foreign language instruction is a complementary alternate process that entails co-operation from the instructors and the learners. Several studies on EFL underscored the indispensability of collaboration in enhancing language skills and constructing knowledge. Bush and Grotjohann (2020) believed that it is critical to keep students engaged in the classroom, which entails reducing the time teachers spend talking and increasing the amount of students' talk time. Naturally, the EFL learners converse in pairs or groups, with each student having their own time to speak. As a result, a fantastic classroom opportunity is required (Colbry, Hurwitz, & Adair, 2014).

There has been a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered in the realm of education (Thune, 2011). Mounting interest in student-centered learning has prompted instructors and academics to conduct a variety of studies on the characteristics of learners and the learning environment. In studies on learner characteristics, a huge emphasis has been placed on students and their role in learning as the learners themselves will be responsible for deciding the course of learning. One teaching style which is regarded as a significant component of modern techniques to teaching a second or foreign language and could be applied to all levels and subjects is co-operative learning, which is one of the variables associated with student attributes (Englik & Kitsantas, 2013).

The concept of co-operative learning refers to an instructional technique in which students of varying abilities work together in small groups to achieve a common goal (Riveros, 2012). According to Cicchino (2015), there is compelling evidence that co-operative teams produce more thought and store data for longer periods than students who work independently. Gallery Runs are a sort of co-operative learning. The Gallery Run is one of the most adaptable student-centered exercises. In various exciting and intuitive ways, the Gallery Run conjoins students to one another and the course subject (Ridwan, 2019).

Namaziandost, Esfahani, Nasri, and Mirshekaran (2018) believed that speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the four major skills in English language training. For two reasons, many people believe that speaking another language is more complicated than the other three talents. First off, unlike reading and writing, speaking occurs constantly. Typically, the person with whom we are chatting is waiting for us to speak at that very moment. Second, unlike writing, speaking does not allow one to change and modify what they say. Speaking in a foreign language presupposes learning a variety of procedures and working out how to play out each of them (Sumana, 2019). Speaking ability, howbeit, was regarded as a difficult skill to maintain. Because of their lack of confidence, learners used to be quiet in class and questioned their ability to speak in English. Practice is likewise momentous for learners because it helps them figure out how to convey their feelings, thoughts, and goals (De, 2020). Therefore, this research study aims at examining the impact of the Gallery Run technique on upper-intermediate EFL Students' speaking skills.

Theoretical Background

Employing pair and group work as an instructional and learning technique is critical for all students. The youngsters learn from and alongside each other because of their enthusiasm in group activities (Garcia & Zeitler, 2017). Working in groups, the students will learn how to
organize and combine their thoughts as well as generate ideas. Students hear other people's opinions and judgments, and they are exposed to a variety of perspectives on subjects and/or situations. The diversity of identities in the group fosters connections that allow students to understand better the zone being studied or explored. It improves students’ linguistic and higher-order cognitive abilities. It is especially beneficial to shy learners who may be scared to speak in front of the entire class. Students who participate in group activities are also encouraged to develop significant social and individual characteristics (Dobao, 2014).

When children work in pairs or groups, they co-operate to attain a particular goal. Co-operative learning is a sort of collaborative learning in which a group works together to supplement each other's and their learning. The development of social skills is critical in co-operative learning. The groups are formally organized, with everyone assigned to a specific duty. Collaborative learning involves students working in groups, whereas co-operative learning involves students working as a group (Rozholdova, 2011; Azari, Pouyan, & Tasouji, 2016).

The benefits of co-operative learning can be summarized as follows: (1) it aids in the academic and personal growth of all students. (2) It fosters healthy relationships among students, resulting in the formation of a learning network that values diversity. (3) It provides the learners with the experiences they need to make solid social, mental, and intellectual progress (Çolak, 2015; Botha, 2021).

Gallery Run is an activity in which students rotate quickly between varieties of errands in the classroom. Before moving on to the next assignment, each one may have a question or a short exercise to complete (Francek, 2006). Students effectively combine imperative concepts, accord working, and public speaking through Gallery Run, which gets them out of their chairs. Groups stroll and swivel quickly around the classroom in Gallery Run, writing answers to questions and echoing the appropriate responses offered by other groups. Questions are written on diagrams or scribbled on scraps of paper strewn throughout the classroom. Each outline includes a specific question that relates to a key lesson topic. The method comes to an end with an oral presentation in which each group combines comments on a given topic (Cheng, 2006; Anwar, 2015; Namaziananost, Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018).

The Gallery Run is versatile and offers several benefits. A Gallery Run can be designed as a quick twenty-minute icebreaker or a five-day project culminates in reviewed oral and written reports. Instead of simply hearing the language from the teacher, the approach encourages students to speak and write it themselves. Aside from considering a wide range of subjective activities such as researching, evaluating, and synthesis, Gallery Run provides the added benefits of improving teamwork, listening skills, and group building. During the Gallery Run, the learners scuttle to prepare bulleted responses to questions written on graphs strategically placed throughout the classroom. After three to five minutes at a graph or, the group moves on to the next question. Open finished inquiry – the point at which a topic, idea, or discussion can be analyzed from a few different points of view – works best with Gallery Run. (Cheng, 2006; Gray & Kolodner, 2000).

Speaking is a communicative contact through which most people evaluate English. On the
other hand, people fail to exercise speaking due to internal variables such as a lack of drive, confidence, and learning capacity. Speaking, as defined by Chaney (1998), and quoted by Kayi (2006), is the process of creating and sharing meaning via the use of verbal and nonverbal images in a variety of circumstances. Furthermore, speaking is a natural way of putting things together, meaning that it comprises giving, receiving, and handling data (Jarrín & Kim, 2019; Saputra, 2018; Gillies & Ashman, 1998).

Many studies have shown that using Gallery Run as a co-operative learning strategy improves native students' speaking abilities. Thornbury (2005), for example, set some steps and directions for all English teachers who want to improve their understanding and classroom abilities and who view speaking to be interactive and require this ability to be enhanced in the management of speaking turns. Richards (2008) provided a helpful prologue to the field of co-operative learning and teaching for educators wishing to better comprehend how its group-grounded learning standards can be effectively employed in second and foreign language learning and teaching. Therefore, the researcher aims at applying this technique to EFL learners to examine its impact on the learners’ speaking abilities.

**Empirical Background**

Slavin (2014) examined how collaborative learning affected EFL students' speaking abilities and anxiety levels. To this purpose, a sample of 60 female intermediate EFL students was picked from a population pool of 80 students studying at a private language institute after the Solution Placement Test was administered. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years old, and they were randomly assigned to one of two groups: control or experimental (N=30). Members of the experimental group were assigned some collaborative errands and were expected to work in groups, while those in the control group were given similar tasks but were not expected to work in groups. The assignments were completed in six sessions by each group. To determine the influence of collaborative learning on improving speaking capacity, an oral interview was conducted with each of the participants in each group. In addition, members were given pre-and post-anxiety tests to see how collaborative work affected pressure reduction. The results of the oral interview independent-sample t-test inquiry revealed that the members of the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of speaking capacity. Similarly, the results of the independent-sample t-test study for anxiety posttest revealed that participants in the experimental group were less concerned after conducting synergistic activities. The members' level of anxiety and satisfaction was checked through a poll distributed to all the participants in the test gathering. The reactions revealed that they had upbeat attitudes regarding collaborative learning.

The impact of co-operative learning on reading ability was investigated by Gillies (2008). Students in the pre-intermediate stage were put through an institutionalized capability exam. Sixty learners were chosen from among them to take part in the inquiry. They were divided into two groups of 30 students at that point. The members were given a pretest first, and then the treatment began a short time afterward. The posttest was completed after the treatment. Finally, the t-test investigation was used, and the p-value obtained (0.000) indicated some development in the experimental group’s reading skills attributed to the co-operative learning treatment given before the posttest.
The impact of co-operative learning on intermediate EFL learners’ reading skills was examined by Kord et al. (2016). With a specific purpose in mind, 90 Iranian EFL participants took the Preliminary English Test, and 65 students (with scores SD = 1) were selected and divided into two groups: experimental and control. A short time later, the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSII) poll was used to assess their reading habits before treatment. During the twelve-session treatment, the experimental group received co-operative learning strategies while working on their reading comprehension, while the control group received traditional education that did not focus on co-operative learning systems. A restricted MANOVA test was used to see the impact of co-operative learning procedures on the experimental group’s reading cognizance and reading strategies. The results demonstrated that co-operative learning methods had a significant positive impact on Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension.

**Research problem and questions**

Surveying and scrutinizing the pertinent review of literature, the researcher noticed that there is a consensus among Saudi and non-Saudi researchers that EFL university students are struggling in English speaking tests. Ali, Shamsan, Guduru, and Yemmela (2019) reported that the Saudi EFL learners’ speaking capabilities are below mediocre and need much amelioration. The speaking competence problem encountered not only the Saudi male learners (Gholamhossein & Siamak, 2010) but also the females (Alhmadi, 2014). The problem does have not only concrete existence in governmental-enhanced schools but also private schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Al Hajailan, 2003).

Even when the learners were randomly set in experimental and control groups, the effect of any treatment given was totally temporary. The upper-intermediate learners are the potential candidates for the university stage, and those who joined the English Department the last three years were reported weak in all language skills, especially speaking. Therefore, this research study tries to answer the following question: “Can Gallery Run technique ameliorate EFL learners’ speaking skill?” To answer this question, the researcher set some sub-questions derived from the research problem.

**RQ1:** Are there any significant differences between the experimental group and the control group in the posttest attributed to the Gallery Run Technique?

**RQ2:** Are there any psychological benefits for co-operative learning, reported by the instructors and the learners after the treatment has been given?

**Research Significance**

The significance of the present research spouts from its pertinent correlation to the labor market requirements. Without high professional speaking skills, the Saudi grads cannot stand out as qualified job applicants. Large businesses and employees have no time to provide English internships to potential applicants; they of course, will opt for those who are already qualified for the job, not those who need qualification and skill amelioration. Moreover, this research derives its indispensability from introducing a new teaching technique for developing EFL learners’ speaking skills. The Gallery Run Technique is an activity in which students rotate quickly between varieties of errands in the classroom. Before moving on to the next assignment, each one...
may have a question or a short exercise to complete. Not only does this technique enhance speaking abilities, but also it alleviates stress and anxiety levels in educational settings. The research in general, bolsters the notion of infotainment in scholastic and college environments.

**Methodology**

**Design and Context of the Study**

This study was conducted in a Saudi language school in Riyadh. The design of the study was experimental research in which the participants were selected randomly and divided into two groups: experimental and control. The two groups were given a pretest and a posttest, with a treatment only given to the experimental group.

**Participants**

To conduct this research study, the researcher randomly selected 62 Saudi upper-intermediate EFL learners out of 85 from a Saudi language school. Steven K. Thompson's equation (See 1 below) was used to calculate the sample size. The upper-intermediate student is the one that has a full understanding of everyday language with some grammatical and lexical errors and can speak without strain. The randomly selected participants were males and females their ages ranged between 15 to 17. To make sure that all the participants are homogeneous, the researchers tested their language proficiency by using OQPT (Oxford Quick Placement Test). In this research study, there were two groups: experimental (Gallery Run group) and control group. Each group included 31 participants.

\[
(1) \quad n = \frac{N p(1-p)}{(N -1)(d^2/z^2) + p(1-p)}
\]

Where n is sample size; N = Population size; z = confidence level at 0.95%; d = error proportion; p = probability

**Instruments**

A proficiency test was administered to homogenize the participants. This was an OQPT test that was completed by all participants in the current study to acquire data on the learners' proficiency. It consisted of 60 multiple-choice items, with learners scoring 35 to 49 classified as upper-intermediate.

The second instrument was a speaking test designed by the researcher. It was a speaking skill pretest comprising several questions about the learners' textbook, New Interchange 3 developed by Jack C. Richards (2017). The students were required to speak for 2 to 3 minutes about the unit's topics, and their speech was videotaped for the second-rater. To examine the reliability of the pretest, the participants were re-tested after five days, and a Pearson coefficient correlation was calculated (\( r = 0.743 \) and \( p > 0.5 \)). To avoid participant error, the pretest was conducted on an open–schedule day selected by the participants themselves.

The third instrument was a posttest of speaking like the pretest in form but different on topics. This test included topics extracted from the New Interchange 3. The level of topics was the same in terms of difficulty and simplicity in both the pretest and the posttest. The reliability of the posttest was calculated through inter-rater reliability using Pearson correlation analysis as (\( r = 0.885 \)). It is worth pointing out that 5 EFL professors confirmed the validity of the pre-and posttests. The fourth instrument was the speaking checklist (designed by the
researcher). It was utilized to assist the raters scoring the participants' performance.

**The normal distribution of the scores in pretest and posttest**

The normality test was conducted to check the normal distribution of the scores of pre-and posttests. A Shapiro-Wilk’s test (p>.05), a visual inspection of the histograms, and normal Q-Q plots and box plots indicated that the scores were normally distributed for the two tests with a skewness of 0.12 and 0.23 and a kurtosis of 2.85 and 2.52 for pretest and posttest respectively.

**Table 1. Normality of distribution of pre-and posttests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Shapiro-Wilk&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection Procedures**

1. In the first phase, 62 homogenous upper-intermediate EFL learners were randomly assigned into two equal groups, an experimental group, and a control group, at a private language institute in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

2. The participants were tested in New Interchange 3. The researcher chose various subjects from New Interchange 3 and asked the students to discuss each topic in 3 minutes. The researcher took notes on the learners’ responses and then examined and scored them with the help of two raters. Based on a speaking checklist developed by the researcher and revised by four professors at the Faculty of Education, Port Said University, the researcher and raters graded the participants' speaking ability and pronunciation.

3. The treatment was given to the experimental group after all the subjects had been pretested. The learners in the experimental group conducted all the activities via the Gallery Run technique in pair and peer groups. The researcher, as a part of the treatment, prepared several discussion questions. The researcher composed four to five questions for each session, putting the identical set of questions in different classroom locations. Questions could be used to assess knowledge and comprehension, as well as higher - order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Individual learners or groups showed their group products (typically on posters) and then ran around the classroom looking at each other's group work during a Gallery Run. They may be requested to give comments to the group of people who created the post. It signifies that each gallery station actively engaged the participants as they ran throughout the classroom. In small groups, they exchanged ideas and responded to each other’s questions and visuals. This method assisted speakers in facing the questions and conversing to discover the correct responses. The participants received 14 treatment sessions over seven weeks. Each session lasted for 45 minutes and was held twice a week.

4. Participants in the control group, on the other hand, continued in traditional speaking activities such as subject discussion, role plays, and dialogues. The researcher asked the
participants in both groups some questions about the previous lesson at the outset of each session. The researcher used a researcher-made speaking posttest to determine the impact of the Gallery Run technique on the participants’ speaking ability after the training was completed. The researcher provided the participants in both groups with various topics to discuss, like the pretest. The learners’ voices were recorded, and their results were compared to those of the pretest. It was time to conduct the analysis once all the data had been collected. The acquired data was examined based on the nature of the data and the study's goal.

Results

The researcher analyzed the data using SPSS.25. To obtain the results, independent and paired samples t-tests were used to compare the means of the experimental and control groups in pretest and posttest. Tables (1) and (2) below sum up the comparison conduct between the means of the pretest scores for the two groups. Table (2) sums up some descriptive statistics pertaining to the two groups, such as the total number of the participants and the mean of scores in each of the two groups.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the pretest for the experimental and control groups

<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>Experimental</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15.82</td>
<td>1.28706</td>
<td>.26351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15.60</td>
<td>1.63712</td>
<td>.32704</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 2, the p-value is 0.381 which is more than the .05 (i.e. level of significance). Therefore, the two groups (viz. the experimental and the control groups), are homogeneous and show no significant differences. The alternative hypothesis (H1) stating that there are significant differences is rejected, and the null hypothesis (H0) stating that there are no significant differences between the two groups is accepted.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-Test for the experimental and control groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</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>Equal variance</td>
<td>assumed</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Equal variance  | 0.725 | 30   | .381  | 0.222 | .305 | -.381 | 1.247 |
To check the differences between the means of the experimental and control groups on the posttest, first, the descriptive statistics was calculated as table (3) shows. This table presents the number of the participants (viz., $N = 31$) in each of the two groups, and the scores of the means in the two groups ($\mu_1 = 31.6010$ with $SD_1 = 1.81405$ and $\mu_2 = 30.1657$ with $SD_2 = 2.32964$ for the experimental group and the control group respectively).

<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>Experimental group</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35.6010</td>
<td>1.81405</td>
<td>.30293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31.1657</td>
<td>2.32964</td>
<td>.40605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table (4), the Independent Samples T-test analysis showed the p-value is .000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the experimental and control groups are not homogeneous and show significant differences. The alternative hypothesis (H1) stating that there are significant differences is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H0) stating that there are no significant differences between the two groups is rejected. It indicates that the Gallery Run technique developed the speaking performance of the upper-intermediate EFL learners.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the posttest for the experimental and control groups

<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>Experimental group</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35.6010</td>
<td>1.81405</td>
<td>.30293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31.1657</td>
<td>2.32964</td>
<td>.40605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When comparing the experimental group's pretest with the posttest (See table 5), the researcher noticed that the significance level is 0.000, is less than 0.05. It indicated a significant difference between the mean of the pretest and that of the posttest. So, these results may imply that the Gallery Run technique effectively influenced the speaking abilities of the experimental group participants.
Table 6. Paired Samples T-Test of the experimental group (Pretest Vs. Posttest)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest and Posttest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>-19.7788</td>
<td>1.336</td>
<td>.2541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.95% Confidence Interval</td>
<td>95% Confidence Interval</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of the Difference</td>
<td>18.126</td>
<td>20.205</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Research Question One: Are there any significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-test attributed to the Gallery Run Technique?

The impact of applying the Gallery Run technique on increasing Egyptian EFL learners' speaking competence was thoroughly investigated in this study. After conducting the independent samples t-test, the results revealed no significant difference in pretest performance between the experimental and control groups, but there was a significant difference in posttest performance between the two groups. It may be inferred that the experimental group that received Gallery Run-based instruction outperformed the control group in terms of scoring.

The experimental group outperformed the control group because they were instructed via the Gallery Run technique. Participants in every session reacted to written explanations or visuals put on newsprint. At that stage, each page of the newsprint contained a variety of stimuli of varying lengths. The learners went on a display run throughout the classroom, picking which stimuli they needed to react to unless they had enough time on their schedule to react to all of them. When the time for writing responses had expired, members took a stroll around the room, as if they were at an exhibition, and read their responses. The Gallery Run functioned best when participants were given highly charged, even frightening, explanations or polemics that prompted them to reveal their personal feelings and thoughts about the topic at hand. The session pioneers can choose these announcements ahead of time, or the members can choose them on the day. The statements may be from their writing or readings. Furthermore, the joyful environment drew the students' attention to an ever-increasing level, allowing the experimental members to learn English faster than the control group, who received no Gallery Run learning. Furthermore, because the learning environment was not overly formal, the Gallery Run technique influenced the students to appreciate the material more.

The findings of this study agree with those of Abd Algani and Abu Alhaiaja (2021), who investigated the impact of co-operative learning on the reading ability of some EFL students. They concluded that the reading performance of the experimental group was enhanced by more than 20.1% as the comparison between the means of the pretest (µ = 19.15) and posttest (µ = 23.4) showed. The findings of Yalçin and Hasan (2018), who investigated the effects of co-operative learning processes on the academic achievement of Intermediate EFL students' reading cognizance and reading strategies, are also supported by this study. During the eight sessions of treatment, the experimental group received co-operative learning techniques...
(CLTs) while working on their reading comprehension, while the control group received standard instruction without a focus on CLTs. After conducting the MANOVA test, the results revealed that co-operative learning processes had a significant favorable impact on intermediate EFL students' reading comprehension and reading strategies.

Research Question 2: Are there any psychological impacts for cooperative learning reported by the learners after the treatment has been given?

To answer this question, a questionnaire is given to the experimental group participants immediately after being given the treatment. The questionnaire items were built after surveying and examining the relevant review of the literature. It comprised two basic sections. Section 1 included some demographic data (i.e., gender, age, and academic level), and Section 2 comprised the learners’ attitudes to co-operative learning. Every item was measured employing a five-point Likert scale. It is a kind of psychometric scale in which the participants define their level of agreement or disagreement to each statement typically in five points: (1) Strongly Disagree (SD); (2) Disagree (D); (3) Neuter (N); (4) Agree (A); and (5) Strongly Agree (SA).

To test the validity of the questionnaire, it was submitted to a jury of five university specialists in psychology at Cairo, Suez, and Ain Shams, and Port Said Universities in Egypt. Most of their comments and suggestions revolved around rephrasing some items. Their rectifications were considered before writing the final version of the questionnaire. To check the questionnaire reliability (i.e., the consistency of the research measure), the researcher conducted a pilot study and calculated the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient that was ≥ 0.70 and considered reliable.

As shown in Table 6, approximately 25.8% and 48.3% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed respectively, that co-operative learning enhanced their self-dependence. Furthermore, 45% of the participants reported that the ambiance was delightful, which conduced to the amelioration of their speaking competence. However, about 9.7% of the EFL learners opposed the notion that the Gallery Run technique created a stress-free ambiance in their class, whereas 58.1% of the participants reported the opposite (See figure 1 below). Another significant result was that 61.2% and 19.3% of the learners strongly agreed and agreed respectively that Gallery Run reduced the levels of loneliness and social anxiety. Respectively, %58.1 and 45.1% strongly agreed that the Gallery Run technique did not put them under any kind of stress nor did it encourage social loafing. A final finding reported by the 48.4 % of the learners was that Gallery Run reduced their alexithymia, social anxiety, and self-monitoring. (See Figure 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-operative learning made me a self-dependent EFL student.</td>
<td>2 (6.4%)</td>
<td>4 (12.9%)</td>
<td>2 (6.5%)</td>
<td>8 (25.8%)</td>
<td>15 (48.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operative learning enjoyably ameliorated my skills.</td>
<td>1 (3.2%)</td>
<td>4 (12.9%)</td>
<td>3 (9.7%)</td>
<td>9 (29.1%)</td>
<td>14 (45.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Co-operative learning is not a time-wasting technique. | 3(9.7%) | 1 (3.2%) | 4(12.9%) | 7 (22.5%) | 16 (51.7%) |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
Co-operative learning makes me stress-free in the class. | 3(9.7%) | 1 (3.2%) | 4(12.9%) | 5(16.1%) | 18 (58.1%) |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
I will enroll in courses grounded on co-operative learning. | 1 (3.2%) | 8(25.8%) | 7 (22.5%) | 5(16.1%) | 10(32.4%) |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
Co-operative learning reduces levels of loneliness and social anxiety | 2 (6.5%) | 2 (6.5%) | 2 (6.5%) | 6(19.3%) | 19(61.2%) |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
Co-operative learning puts me under constant stress. | 18 (58.1%) | 5(16.1%) | 4(12.9%) | 1 (3.2%) | 3(9.7%) |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
Co-operative learning encourages social loafing. | 14(45.1%) | 6(19.4%) | 4(12.9%) | 4(12.9%) | 3(9.7%) |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
It reduces my alexithymia, social anxiety, and self-monitoring. | 1 (3.2%) | 6(19.4%) | 2 (6.5%) | 7 (22.5%) | 15(48.4%) |
---|---|---|---|---|---|

**Figure 1.** The psychological aspects of Gallery Run technique

**Conclusion**

The current study, which aimed to assess the efficiency of the Gallery Run technique on Saudi upper-intermediate learners' speaking abilities, found that the type of instructions students receive has a significant role in their oral performance. Because students struggle with English and have difficulty communicating, instructors can use the Gallery Run Technique to provide their students with an engaging and effective teaching strategy. According to t-test analysis, experimental students' oral skills improved because of the Gallery Run technique, which provided a lively and happy setting for language acquisition. Because the learning process is not overly...
formal, the Gallery Run technique allowed students to enjoy themselves in the educational setting. Furthermore, this strategy encourages students to physically run around the classroom while studying the subject, as well as giving them time to respond to any point-related concerns that they may not be aware of. The learners’ positive attitudes were enhanced the study results which showed that 25.8% and 48.3% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the Gallery Run technique enhanced their self-dependence. Furthermore, 45% of the participants reported that the ambiance was delightful, which condued to the amelioration of their speaking competence. However, about 9.7% of the EFL learners opposed the notion that the Gallery Run technique created a stress-free ambiance in their class, whereas 58.1% of the participants reported the opposite.

Acknowledgments
I take this opportunity to thank Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University in the 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 [2021/02/17837].

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References


Phonological Constraints on the Utterance of L2 Clusters by Saudi ESL Learners

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Received: 9/21/2021 Accepted: 12/2/ 2021 Published:12/27/2021

Abstract:
The field of L2 phonology did not receive much research compared to the other linguistic domains. To add to the field and expand the current literature, the present paper’s goal was to examine the impact of syllable structure differences between Arabic and English in uttering L2 English consonant clusters. The following research question was aimed to be answered: Do the differences between two languages’ syllable structure cause production difficulties in the consonant cluster to Saudi Arabian learners of English? The subjects of this investigation were L2 English learners from Saudi with intermediate proficiency levels in English. Applying the descriptive correlational type of research model, the results showed that learners’ production is mainly influenced by their native language-specific phonological features. The learners' production of targeted L2 consonant clusters seemed to mirror their underlying phonological system, and syllables structures were modified to match their native Arabic phonological system as a result of language transfer. These findings should be taken into account by L2 speech educators as such speech difficulty is anticipated.

Keywords: Consonant cluster, language interference, L2 phonology, L2 production, L2 perception, L2 syllable, Saudi Arabic

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.36
Introduction

In many cases the absent of intelligibility in L2 speech is due to misdealing with L2 phonological rules, especially in pronouncing marked sounds. This lead to failure in communication between the L2 speaker and the listener. The sufficient acquisition of L2 grammatical competence that includes L2 phonology is essential for L2 learner’s fluency; thus, under the umbrella of communicative competence, phonology is counted as a core subcategory (Brown, 2007; Morley, 1991). Educators in the field of L2 need to emphasis more on speech issues. The L1 phonological system has always been hard to limit its patterns in L2 learner’s speech, which constantly lead to have nonnative accent-like (Alotaibi, 2013; Alotaibi, 2018; Hameyer & Grosse, 1976; Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

The effect of an L1 phonological system can often be noticed in the production of an L2 consonant cluster, which is a set of consonant sounds that occur at the end, or the beginning of a syllable (Ladefoged & Johnson, 1993). The difficulties in producing these clusters happen when L2 learners try to utter sounds according to the L2 phonological system. This is due to the fact that syllables and consonant clusters vary cross-linguistically from one language to another (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin & Griner, 2010; Jabbari & Samvachi, 2011).

Taking this into account, the present study starts with reviewing some studies related to the literature, along with providing elaboration on phonological structure, centered on the syllable. Specifically, introduce syllable structure in targeted languages of this study, Arabic and English. Furthermore, it presents an essential hypothesis in the field named Contrastive Analysis that is used as a theoretical framework through which the data is interpreted; the hypothesis was proposed by Lado (1957).

Literature Review

Similar related studies

One of the notable studies that inspected the utterance of clusters in English by L2 learners was Jabbari and Samavarchi (2011). They looked at the difficulties encountered by the L2 learners in pronouncing the L2 English consonant cluster. The subject, Persian native speakers, had to do a production task, which involved listening to the targeted clusters in words, each word was repeated twice, and the subject had to repeat the words back. The production of each one of the subjects was recorded and later analyzed acoustically.

The acoustic analysis showed that there were phonological changes in subjects’ production for L2 consonant clusters, which seemed influenced by their L1 Persian phonological system, known as phonological interference. Specifically, they reconstruct the L2 syllable structure to look like and fit their L1 syllable structure by epenthesizing the onset cluster. This phonological modification leads to generate another extra new syllable, in their production for the word, instead of one syllable, because of having two consonant clusters.

The effect of such phonological interference is not only observed on the production but also on the perception of L2 sounds (Pallier, Bosch & Sebastián-Gallés, 1997; Sebastián-Gallés, & Soto-Faraco, 1999). Kabak and Idsard (2007) examined L2 English consonant clusters perceptual difficulties encountered by L1 Korean subjects. The researcher tried to spot the light on the cause of perceptual epenthesis; whether it was due to resections on
phonological sequences that was influenced by the listeners’ L1 phonological system in receiving L2 consonant cluster or no. The outcomes of their research illustrate the enormous role of subjects’ native phonological system, that acted as a filter in perceiving targeted consonant clusters according to L1 Korean syllable structure. There was more of implementing epenthesis on the perceived cluster rather than neutralization or any other phonological changes such as nasalization or lateralization.

In a similar vein, Chang (2004) examined the nature of difficulties encountered by L2 Chinese learners during the phonological processing of the English consonant clusters. The types of errors found traced back to subjects’ L1 Chinese phonological system, which allows just one single consonant in its onset within the syllable structure, unlike English that allows one, two, and three consonants in its onset. This divergence between the two languages syllable structure led to phonological interference that caused the omission of the sound cluster in the onset, and epenthesis to break up the cluster. Besides syllable complexity, speech rate was also found to have a role in increasing the difficulties in perceiving consonant clusters.

Byrd and Tan (1996) looked at the acoustic length of the consonants, phonemic boundaries, and latency effect in phonological processing. They found that it is also a factor that could hinder the perception of L2 clusters, causing overlap or displacement of consonants, endorsed by the divergence between the L1 and L2 syllable structure. It is worth noticing here that consonant cluster is classified as marked, meaning that it is rare to be found in world languages (Greenberg, 2005; Schreier, 2005). A term refers to linguistics features that are not common and not shared among learners’ first language and second language as defined by the Markedness Differential Hypothesis (Eckman, 1977).

In Arabic language, initial consonant clusters are considered to be marked phonological feature, because it does not exist in Arabic phonological system (Al-Ani, 1970). Therefore, Arabic ESL learners would encounter difficulties in producing L2 English words that have word-initial consonant clusters (Jabbari & Fazlinezhad, 2011). “Second language (L2) learners of English are more likely to encounter obstacles, when it comes to communicating freely with English native speakers. In fact, this difficulty is somewhat anticipated, especially when the two languages being compared come from different backgrounds” (Al-Yami & Al-Athwary, 2021, p. 1237). Similar to earlier mentioned studies, Arabic ESL learners may alternate L2 phonological feature, syllable structure, through epenthesis or omission, to tailor it to look like their L1 Arabic phonological features.

**Syllable structure cross-linguistically**

According to Nathan (2008), In any world language, a syllable under the phonological domain can be deconstructed into a vowel, which is the head of a syllable and named as “Rhyme” or “Nucleus” respectively. Consonant represents the other two parts, “Onset” at the beginning of the nucleus or “Coda” at the end of the syllable, see Figure 1. However, it is possible that a syllable can have no coda, but it must have a nucleus because there are phonological rules that need to be followed in constructing a syllable. Yet, this phonological rule is language-specific and varies across-world languages (O’Grady, Katamba, Archibald, 2011). For instance, the Arabic phonological rule does not allow consonant clusters in the onset (Watson, 2002), while the English language does allow (Treiman, 1989).
Arabic syllable structure

According to Watson (2002), Arabic syllable structure has five types of syllables. See Table 1. These types of syllables are considered to be unmarked syllables in world languages. The lowest necessary construction of the Arabic syllable is a CV, and the highest component is CVCC (Al-Ani, 1970). Arabic consonant clusters exist only in the coda, and there are no onset consonant clusters. The highest number of clusters is two, as can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1. Arabic syllable structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllable Type</th>
<th>Arabic example</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>[la]</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVV</td>
<td>[fei]</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVC</td>
<td>[qam]</td>
<td>Stand up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVVC</td>
<td>[saam]</td>
<td>fasted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVCC</td>
<td>[sabt]</td>
<td>sturday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English syllable structure

In the English language, the syllable structure has more variety than the Arabic language. A common syllable between the two languages would be CV, CVC, and CVCC. Yet, there are more fourteen syllables in English than in Arabic, see Table 2. Unlike Arabic, English allows both onset and coda consonant clusters. Also, the consonant clusters in English can consist of two, three, and four consonants (Treiman, 1989). Based on this, and according to the CAH Hypothesis, one could predict that Arabic learners of English could encounter difficulties in both, producing and perceiving L2 English syllables.

Table 2. L2 targeted syllables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllable Type</th>
<th>English example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCC</td>
<td>ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCCC</td>
<td>amps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>knee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVC</td>
<td>sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVCC</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)

In this study, the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis serves as the theoretical framework, based on which the outcomes are discussed. The theory was introduced by Lado (1975) and simply state that by considering L1 linguistics characteristics and specifics in comparison to L2, points of difficulties for L2 learner could be predicted. That is, the shared phonological characteristics between L1 and L2 are transferable and easy to produce, while those that are different could be difficult to acquire. The theory helps to a great extent to identify the point of difficulties and errors during the learning process in the L2 language. It would help to explain the production difficulties in producing L2 English clusters by Arabic learners. The research agenda at the core of this investigation is translated into the following research question:

Do the differences between two languages’ syllable structure cause production difficulties in the consonant cluster to Saudi Arabian learners of English?

Methodology

Participants

The subjects were 12 Saudi Arabic ESL, with an age range between 24 and 29 and a mean age of 26. They were chosen among ESL learners at US college and had a length of stay for at least 8 months. The recruiting process was conducted through a word-of-mouth announcement given at social academic events. The self-reported proficiency level, based on TOEFL scores, all subjects were in the intermediate level.

Research Instrument

The implemented instrument in data collection included reading a list of six sentences from a handout paper. Each of the sentences included two to three targeted consonant clusters in English words, see Table 3. The overall number of consonant clusters was fourteen, and the subject utterance for these clusters was recorded.

Table 3. Sentences that were given to the subjects to read out from the handout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The boy with the red surfboard chased the man who made the structure with a sponge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. My strategy was approved, and no one stole the magical plant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. I asked if the hen eats tree leaves and ants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. In spring the streets are beautiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. The school truck door was a slab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. The desk starts to break.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCV</td>
<td>blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCVC</td>
<td>sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCVCC</td>
<td>stink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCVCCC</td>
<td>prints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCVCCCC</td>
<td>bursts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCV</td>
<td>scree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCVC</td>
<td>straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCVCC</td>
<td>sprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCVCCC</td>
<td>sprints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCVCCCC</td>
<td>splints</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Procedure

Since there was a recording for the targeted clusters, each subject was taped separately in a calm lab-room using the speech analyzer program. The subject had to familiarize themselves with sentences for four minutes. Then the subject was required to read each sentence loudly three times. Later, the elicited data was analyzed through spectrograms via speech analyzer software and transcribed using IPA symbols.

Results and discussion

The current study was interested in the utterance of L2 consonant clusters by Saudi Arabian ESL learners. For this purpose, it aimed to provide an in-depth account of how syllable structure differences between the two languages, Arabic and English, could affect the production of English consonant clusters by Saudi Arabian ESL learners. The subjects’ utterances were transcribed phonetically as can be viewed below in Table 4.

Table 4. Subjects’ utterance for targeted word, each subject was coded as “S” followed by his data number.


The targeted words were later analyzed according to error frequency in each word. Phonological epenthesis in the subjects’ production was counted as an error; see Table 5 below.
Table 5. Error frequency per word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Epenthesis</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Epenthesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sɜːrfbɔːrd</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>əˈpruːvd</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strʌktʃər</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>stool</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spændʒ</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>plænt</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stræt3dʒi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>əːsk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iːts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>ənt</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>triː</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>sprɪŋ</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liːvz</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>striːt</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skuːl</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>desk</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trʌk</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>staːrt</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slæb</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>breɪk</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show quite interesting findings regarding the production of L2 English clusters. It provides evidence regarding the role of the L1 phonological system, full transfer, on the subjects’ production. The elicited data implies that all types of L2 consonant clusters in targeted syllable structures, VC, VCC, CCV, CVCC, CCVC, CCVCC, and CCCV are treated the same. What happened here is that subjects may have treated the clusters as high on the scale of markedness (Greenberg, 2005; Schreier, 2005). That is, a cluster that is rare or does not exist in L1 Arabic, were problematic for them to utter, which is similar to the pattern seen before in Korean L2 learners (Kabak & Idsard, 2007). The subjects’ production errors here could be attributed to the sequence of consonants in Arabic clusters, which is language-specific (Al-Ani, 1970).

Definitely, the observed errors found on the subjects’ production were not erratic, but rather systematic caused by L1 Arabic. Consonant sonority profile within the cluster of L2 could constrain a challenge for L2 learners. Although the subjects were all intermediate level learners, their L2 acquired phonological system is still under development and ongoing process, which is vulnerable to interlanguage phonology as illustrated by Lado (1975), through his Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. As seen in the literature, the subject demonstrator pattern is similar to the ones observed in Chang’s (2004) study for Chinese learners acquiring English as L2.

In addition to the difference between L1 and L2 phonological systems, words familiarity in the used stimuli could be a count as a factor that has a role in increasing the error rate on the subjects’ performance. Looking into the Arabic phonological system, one could postulate that the subjects should be able to produce the coda clusters easily in L2 English. Especially that some of the production errors did not have an effect trace of the phonological system of L1 neither L2. Another factor is input quality that could affect the phonological skills of learners (Alotaibi, 2018), having sufficient and high quality of L2 phonological input could help the learners to acquire L2 native-like speech (Nogoud, 2020).

Conclusion

The analysis of this paper has illustrated the impact of L1 phonological system-specific in the production of targeted L2 consonant clusters. The data showed evidence that having a cluster in the native language does not mean the case that learners would be successful in producing consonant clusters in L2. In this paper, it was clear that phonological transfer played an enormous role that can be observed under the scope of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis.
by comparing the two languages' phonological systems. Last but not least, further research on the perceptional level as in production level is needed to have a better understanding of the learner's underline phonological processing. Also, considering individual differences, specifically in the amount of language use among subjects, along with some other extra-linguistic factors such as age and social background, would help to understand their potential effect on the subjects’ speech.

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Reference


