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Investigating Competency-Based Learning Implementation at the Northern Border University (NBU): A Descriptive Analytical Study

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Abstract
Competency-Based Learning implementation has become a necessity at the Northern Border University (NBU), the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). However, there are still a lot of implementation challenges that need to be faced. In an attempt to overcome some of these challenges, this study conducted to identify the awareness level of competency-based learning among EFL faculty and to assess the extent to which faculty teaching practices, as well as EFL course descriptions, are supportive to competency-based learning at the NBU? The descriptive-analytical method was used in this study. The study sample included all faculty members (both male & female) teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the NBU during the academic year 2020–2021. To achieve the objectives of this study, a self-report questionnaire was used to elicit information about NBU faculty awareness level of competency-based learning. The questionnaire was also used to assess faculty views regarding their teaching practices and regarding EFL course descriptions used. Descriptive statistics were used in the present study. Results showed that overall awareness level of competency-based learning among NBU faculty is medium. Results also showed that the teaching practices of EFL faculty at the NBU, concerning all elements of competency-based learning are generally low and do not support competency-based learning. Moreover, results showed that course descriptions used at the NBU do not support competency-based learning. In light of these results, educational implications and some recommendations for raising faculty awareness of competency-based learning and for competency-based course design were discussed.

Keywords: Competency, competency-based learning, competency-based curriculum, Northern Border University

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Introduction

It is commonly agreed that education is a crucial factor that influences one’s situation in the labor market upon graduation. Education prepares learners for future occupations by equipping them with required skills. Yet, with the rapid appearance and creation of new jobs and occupations, nowadays, that need innovative knowledge and skills, it becomes difficult or even impossible for educational institutions, to cater for the increasing needs of the labor market (Małgorzata, Justyna, & Michał, 2020; Ionescu, 2012). Supporting this, Gáthy (2013) puts it clear that “higher education usually does not meet the requirements of the labor market and, what is more, it actually contributes to the unemployment of young graduates” (cited in Varga, Szira, Bardos, & Hajos, 2016, pp. 95-96). Furthermore, there is an extensively reported complaint among employers of the shortage in employees who are capable of transferring their acquired knowledge to solve work problems and make the proper decisions (Rodriguez & Gallardo, 2017).

Accordingly, a shift is needed, in educational paradigms, from traditional time-based to outcome-based or competency-based which concentrates on the type of knowledge, skills, values and behaviors required for achieving the desired level of performance in a particular job or activity in the labor market. That shift which focuses on innovation in higher education, is one of the most important elements of the Saudi Arabian Kingdom’s Vision 2030.

Despite the willingness on the part of universities, stakeholders, as well as employers, to implement competency-based learning, little is known about how to incorporate it into bachelor degree programs (Dragoo & Barrows, 2016; Bosman & Arumugam, 2019). Furthermore, there is a significant lack of peer-reviewed literature on CBL curriculum design (Torres, Brett, Cox & Greller, 2018; Jennifer, Ellen & Jessica, 2017; Ryan & Cox, 2017). Hence, this study sought to investigate competency-based learning implementation at the NBU and the extent to which program study plans, as well as faculty teaching practices, support competency-based learning.

The study sought to answer the following question:
1. What is the level of awareness of competency-based learning among EFL faculty at the NBU?
2. To what extent do EFL faculty teaching practices support competency-based learning at the NBU?
3. To what extent do EFL course descriptions support competency-based learning at the NBU?

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:
1. Identify the level of awareness of competency-based learning among EFL faculty at the NBU.
2. Identify the extent to which faculty teaching practices support competency-based learning at the NBU.
3. Identify the extent to which EFL course descriptions support competency-based learning at the NBU?

The significance of this study stems from the importance of its problem. Core competency research, as one of the most urgent research priorities at the NBU. Competency-based learning has become a crucial issue in university education. Policymakers, as well as those responsible for education, have come to agree the traditional time-based systems of education and ineffective teaching practices are to be replaced by a new and adequate educational paradigm that has the potential of lowering costs and help in graduating strong employable labor forces for
the increasing requirements of the labor market. However, there are still many challenges in implementing competency-based learning that need to be tackled and this study is an attempt that potentially contribute to overcome these challenges.

**Literature Review**

**Competency-Based Learning**

With the change in higher education institutions, as required by the digitization of the society, from being centers of "knowledge dissemination to the core of forming specific competencies" that individuals need for their professional, as well as their social lives, competency-based learning has become a necessity nowadays (Kostikova, Viediernikova, Holubnyccha, & Miasoiedova, 2019, p. 118). Competency-based learning, especially in postgraduate education, represents a change from a mainly time-based model to an outcome-based one which is concerned with the attainment of individual competencies that define the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by a particular specialty (Evan, et al., 2020). This method of instruction deviates from setting time limits, during which students are asked to learn a given amount of knowledge and allows students to proceed in learning at their own pace. Thus, the learning objective changes from attaining an increased quantity of knowledge which can be delivered along one semester or quarter, to making sure that students master pre-determined learning outcomes before advancing to the following level (Henri, Johnson, & Nepal, 2017).

For Parson, Childs, & Elzie (2018) competency-based learning has grown significantly as a method that clearly connects skills of a particular profession and its protocols to the curriculum. In competency-based curriculum design, choices are based on the knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to be proficient in their professions upon graduation. According to Johnstone & Soares (2014), competency-based education is urgently required nowadays for two reasons; firstly, it reorients the process of education toward the established mastery and application of gained knowledge and skills in the real world outside the educational institutions. In so doing, a bridge is built between academics and employers that leads to a better understanding of the type of knowledge and skills required by students to succeed in workplaces in their real life. Furthermore, competency-based education offers a means for helping quality and affordability to be found side by side in higher education.

Competency-based learning, for Henri, et al. (2017), is "an outcome-based, student-centered form of instruction" (p. 607). According to that system of instruction, students are allowed to proceed to more advanced tasks upon mastering the essential pre-determined requirements of knowledge and skills. McDonald (2018) claims that competency-based higher education can be attractive to students because it enables them to master, often at a speed that suits them, the competencies essentially required for future careers.

**Key Principles of Competency-Based Learning**

After reviewing relevant literature (Johnstone & Soares, 2014; Kris & Yvonne, 2014; Williams, Moser, Youngblood & Singer 2015; Richard & Bedard-Vorhees, 2016; Fowler, 2018; Parson, Childs, & Elzie, 2018; McDonald, 2018; Sturgis & Casey, 2018; Egbert & Shahrotni, 2019; Ralf, et al., 2020; among others) key principles of competency-based learning are summarized below:
Focus is on Demonstrable Competencies

Unlike traditional or outcomes-based education, the focus in competency-based learning is on the demonstration of mastery of pre-determined and identified specific competencies and skills (Parson, Childs, & Elzie, 2018). The student is assumed "do" not just "know". These competencies should derive from societal needs analysis and reflect vocational central problems and essential knowledge and skills students need after graduation.

From Credit to Competency-Based System

In a competency-based learning system, students are allowed to progress forward at their own pace regardless of age, seat time or other students. Once a student demonstrates mastery of identified competencies and necessary skills, s/he is free to move ahead. Student demonstrated mastery of academic content is assessed against established benchmarks (McDonald, 2018).

From Faculty to Student-Centered

In a competency-based learning system, a radical change in the roles of both faculty and students is done. Faculty no longer serve as knowledge transmitters responsible for lecturing over a specified number of hours and weeks. Their roles change from that of "sages on the stages" to "guides on the sides." They work with their students as facilitators who lead discussions, guide their learning, answer their questions and help them apply the knowledge they acquire. On the other hand, student roles change from passive recipients to proactive knowledge-producing ones (Egbert & Shahrokni, 2019). Thanks to the practical reusable learning resources available any time when required, students in competency-based learning are responsible for their own learning and for moving forward toward mastery.

From Traditional Grading to Ongoing Competency-Based Assessment

Instead of being at set points in time throughout the academic year, assessment in a competency-based learning is a criterion-referenced ongoing process which is achieved via skill-specific rubrics. It aims to give students actual information on their progress towards mastery of target competencies and essential skills required to move ahead to the following study level (Fowler, 2018). Assessment in competency-based learning is a valid and reliable process that can take several forms.

Personalized Learning via Faculty Availability

In a competency-based learning system, students receive just-in-time differentiated help according to their needs and abilities. Faculty should be ready to step in when their individual students need help. Faculty work with struggling students individually and help them draw on their strengths to help them move forward (Ralf, et al., 2020). In so doing, they offer them personalized learning and equal opportunities to succeed. Faculty should not wait for students requesting for help. Moreover, faculty should be wholly aware of each individual student’s progress.

Transparency

In competency-based learning, transparency is a fundamental principle. Target competencies and skills must be clear to the students from the very beginning. A clear definition of these competencies should be given to the students. They should know what they are expected to master and demonstrate. Also, they should know how to master these competencies and how
their work for each competency will be assessed. To be aware of their progress towards mastery, a detailed rubric for each competency with its observable outcomes should be provided to the students. Moreover, students should understand well how the target competencies will benefit them in their future life after graduation (Sturgis & Casey, 2018).

Related Studies

To connect this study with the work already done for attaining an overall relevance and purpose, a review of related studies is presented here:

Evan, et al. (2020) conducted a study that aimed to identify needs of the faculty to support the change to Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME) by using an online survey which was designed to collect data from faculty members about their knowledge of the principles of CBME and the famous evaluation methods. The survey was also designed to elicit information about barriers to the application of CBME in obstetrics and gynecology residency programs across Canada. Results showed that although CBME is considered a positive change by most faculty members, some knowledge gaps were there among faculty members about CBME. Results also showed that the most significant barriers to the application of CBME comprised a lack of training in assessment, financial inferences and time restrictions.

Using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, the study of Małgorzata, et al. (2020) aimed to investigate and compare the opinions of employers and prospective employees on the required competencies of the possible labor market members. The study used interviews of recruiters (on behalf of potential employers) and a survey of university alumnae (prospective employees). Results of the study showed that both the Polish alumnae as well as the employers identify the shortages of professional competencies required in the labor market. Employers also believed that the alumnae are not well prepared to use the acquired theoretical knowledge in practice.

The study of Kostikova, et al. (2019) was done to investigate the impact of a competency-based learning model for foreign language teaching on the successful accomplishment of the first certificate in English. It was showed that competency-based approach to teaching a foreign language for specific purposes is the most relevant type. Using a mixed-methods approach Kabombwe and Mulenga (2019) investigated the implementation of the competency-based teaching and learning among history teachers in in Lusaka district, Zambia. Results of the study showed that 67% of the participants did not understand the concept of competency-based learning. Results also showed that teachers were not using competency-based approaches because of a lack of awareness and skills required for implementing competency-based approaches.

Torres, Brett, Cox and Greller (2018), in a qualitative case study, described how competency-based education was implemented in three areas in New Hampshire. Results of their study showed that despite the improvement achieved over six years at each area, competency-based education had not been wholly implemented as a result of many challenges among which were inertial, practical, regulating and political ones. Jennifer, et al. (2017) aimed to prove how competency-based courses could be designed and implemented, in traditional educational environments in both online and classroom-based courses. They conducted a case study of a
competency-based learning 'introduction to psychology course' in a private university in the Western United States. The study offered two competency-based units; one of them was online and the other was in the classroom. Eleven undergraduate participants attended the online unit and 24 attended the classroom-based unit of the course. The course design was presented for both units, including intended learning outcomes, projects and score assignments, teaching methods, together with student and teacher reflections on the intended learning outcomes.

Methods

Population and Sample

The study population included all faculty members (both male & female) teaching EFL, during the academic year 2020–2021, at the NBU, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To reach valid and reliable conclusions, a random sample of 151 faculty was used in this study. After rejecting questionnaires with missing data and improperly answered ones, one hundred and six (106) questionnaire data entered for final analysis.

Study Instruments

After a thorough review of related studies as well as literature which was written on competency-based education (Evan, et al., 2020; Małgorzata, et al., 2020; Kostikova, et al., 2019; Torres, et al., 2018; Jennifer, et al., 2017; Ryan & Cox, 2017; among others) a 46-item questionnaire, was prepared for identifying NBU faculty awareness level of competency-based learning as well as their views regarding their teaching practices and regarding EFL course descriptions. The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale system ranging from 1 to 5 (5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree). The maximum score on this scale is 230, whereas the minimum score is 46.

In this questionnaire, participants were asked to choose the option that actually expresses how much they agree or disagree with the different statements about competency-based learning. The questionnaire, in its final form, consisted of seven parts: awareness of CBL (items 1-10), progression through demonstration of mastery of competencies (items 11-14), personalized instruction (items 15-21), flexible assessment (items 22-25), improvement of skills and positive dispositions (holistic development) (items 26-32), transparency (items 33-37) and course description (items 38-46).

Validity, Internal Consistency and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Validity

The questionnaire’s validity was established by showing it to a jury of experts in the research area who made their comments regarding the statement of the questionnaire's items, its format and its suitability to the participants of this study. Keeping the feedback from the jury members in mind, statements that did not go well with the questionnaire's objectives were removed.

The Internal Consistency

The questionnaire was administered to a pilot sample consisting of 20 randomly selected faculty who did not participate in the sample of the study. The Pearson's Coefficient was used to find the correlation of each statement with the total degree of the dimension it represents utilizing the software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS):
Table 1. The values of the correlation coefficients between each statement and the total degree of the dimension to which it belongs and the level of its significance. (N = 20)

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<td>43</td>
<td>**.790</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>**.813</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>**.710</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>**.280</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

It is evident from table one that the correlation coefficients of each statement with the total degree of the dimension it represents were all statistically significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that all the statements of the study questionnaire have an appropriate degree of internal consistency. This means that the questionnaire enjoys a high degree of internal consistency.
The questionnaire's internal consistency was also assessed by calculating the correlation coefficient between the degree of each dimension and the total degree of the questionnaire as shown in the following table:

**Table 2. The correlation coefficients between the dimensions of the questionnaire with each other and between them and the total degree of the questionnaire (n = 20).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency-based learning (CBL) Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty awareness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression through demonstration</td>
<td>.804**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized instruction</td>
<td>.898**</td>
<td>.877**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible assessment</td>
<td>.849**</td>
<td>.799**</td>
<td>.869**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of Skills</td>
<td>.885**</td>
<td>.895**</td>
<td>.918**</td>
<td>.877**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>.877**</td>
<td>.810**</td>
<td>.926**</td>
<td>.813**</td>
<td>.915**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course description</td>
<td>.843**</td>
<td>.866**</td>
<td>.936**</td>
<td>.792**</td>
<td>.892**</td>
<td>.933**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Degree</td>
<td>.940**</td>
<td>.907**</td>
<td>.977**</td>
<td>.895**</td>
<td>.961**</td>
<td>.955**</td>
<td>.956**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

It is clear from table two that the values of the correlation coefficients between the dimensions of the questionnaire and its total degree are high and statistically significant at 0.01 level. This affirms the availability of internal consistency in the questionnaire.

**Reliability**

The questionnaire's reliability was examined in two different ways: by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and by using the Spearman-Brown formula.

**Table 3. Reliability coefficients of the questionnaire's dimensions using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the Spearman-Brown formula.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency-based learning (CBL) Items</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Spearman-Brown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty awareness</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td>.935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression through Demonstration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized Instruction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>.909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table three shows that according to both Cronbach's alpha coefficient and Spearman-Brown formula, the reliability coefficient of the study questionnaire for all dimensions was more significant than the acceptable percentage. Besides, the reliability coefficient of the total score of the questionnaire was also superior than the required percentage. Overall reliability coefficient was 0.966 as calculated by Cronbach's alpha and 0.983 as calculated by Spearman-Brown's formula. This indicates that the study questionnaire enjoys reasonable reliability.

Participants' responses to this questionnaire were judged according to the following judgment criterion:

Table 4. The criterion for judging the responses of the study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Acceptance Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1.00-1.79)</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.80-2.59)</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2.60-3.39)</td>
<td>Medium/Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3.40-4.19)</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4.20-5.00)</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of the Study

Results reached after data analysis are presented in this part. Descriptive statistics were used in this study by using the latest version of the software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Answer to the First Question

As stated earlier in this study, the first question asked: *what is the level of awareness of competency-based learning among EFL faculty at the NBU?* To answer this question, participants' responses to the first dimension of the questionnaire are presented:

Table 5. Means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample to the questionnaire’s items in the dimension of faculty awareness of CBL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Competency-based learning (CBL) Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When talking about competencies we are referring to the essential skills and knowledge a student must learn to graduate not the required credits s/he has to complete.</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>V. low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>In CBL, emphasis is on measurable competencies that help build students' skills for life.</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.050</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table five displays that the awareness level of competency-based learning among EFL faculty at the NBU is generally medium with an obtained mean score of 3.217 and with a standard deviation of 0.874. The table shows that faculty at the NBU have a moderate level of awareness of competency-based learning with the knowledge that "competencies that should be based on a practical understanding of basic concepts, knowledge application to real-life situations, and mastery of related important skills" being at the peak of their awareness (rank 1) and with the knowledge that "when talking about competencies we are referring to the essential skills and the knowledge a student must learn to graduate not the required credits s/he has to complete" being at the base of their awareness (rank 10).

**Answer to the Second Question**

As stated earlier in this study, the second question asked: ‘to what extent do EFL faculty teaching practices support competency-based learning at the NBU? To answer this question,
participants' responses to the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth dimensions of the questionnaire are presented:

Table 6. *Means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample to the questionnaire’s items in the dimension of progression through demonstration of mastery of competencies.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Competency-based learning (CBL) Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Through regular assessments of my students and by using observational progress reports on learning, I can identify where each student is.</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>When a student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material, proves his/her ability to apply that understanding in real-life situations and shows how s/he developed essential skills, s/he is allowed to move forward.</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.826</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A student is able to move on to the following competency when s/he is ready even if other colleagues in the course are not.</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>.761</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In my classes, a student might work on numerous competencies concurrently, when s/he masters one, s/he is allowed to move to the following one.</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table six reveals that teaching practices of EFL faculty at the NBU, concerning progression through demonstration of mastery of competencies, are generally low with an obtained mean score of 2.132 and with a standard deviation of 0.900. These practices as such do not support competency-based learning. The table shows that "identifying where each student is through regular assessment of students and by means of observational progress reports on learning" came at the top of their teaching practices (rank one) in this element of competency-based learning. On the other hand, "allowing a student to move forward when s/he demonstrates a clear understanding of the material, proves his/her ability to apply that understanding in real-life situations and shows how s/he developed essential skills" came as the least practiced (rank four) in this element.

Table 7. *Means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample to the questionnaire’s items in the dimension of personalized instruction.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Competency-based learning (CBL) Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In my classes, I teach my students and support them on the basis of</td>
<td>1.849</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table seven indicates that teaching practices of EFL faculty at the NBU, concerning personalized instruction, are generally low with an obtained mean score of 2.049 and with a standard deviation of 0.857. These practices as such do not support competency-based learning. The table shows that "working with students individually or in small groups" came at the top of their teaching practices (rank one) in this element of competency-based learning. On the other hand, "teaching students and supporting them on the basis of their separate strengths and weaknesses and giving them all the same chances to succeed" came as the least practiced (rank seven) in this element.

Table 8. Means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample to the questionnaire’s items in the dimension of flexible assessment.
Table eight indicates that teaching practices of EFL faculty at the NBU, concerning personalized instruction, are generally low with an obtained mean score of 2.121 and with a standard deviation of 2.461. These practices as such do not support competency-based learning. The table shows that "giving students several opportunities to demonstrate mastery of each course competency" came at the top of their teaching practices (rank one) in this element of competency-based learning. On the other hand, "allowing students to demonstrate their mastery of each course competency in several ways" came as the least practiced (rank four) in this element.

Table 9. Means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample to the questionnaire’s items in the dimension of improvement of skills and positive dispositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Competency-based learning (CBL) Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I encourage my students to respect other people's feelings.</td>
<td>3.321</td>
<td>1.284</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I explain to my students how to accept others and treat them with respect, even when they're different from them or they disagree with them.</td>
<td>1.594</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>When a student in my class has difficulty in learning something, I usually give him/her advice and offer him/her strategies that help him/her to keep trying.</td>
<td>1.745</td>
<td>.744</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I consistently encourage my students to take responsibility for their learning.</td>
<td>1.633</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I consistently demonstrate explicit strategies to my students to use anytime to help each other learn.</td>
<td>1.679</td>
<td>.711</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I consistently demonstrate explicit strategies to my students that they can use anytime to work together effectively in groups.</td>
<td>1.726</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I consistently encourage my students to help each other even after class time and outside of the class.</td>
<td>3.359</td>
<td>1.189</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2.151</td>
<td>0.868</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(rank one) in this element of competency-based learning. On the other hand, "explaining to students how to accept others and treat them with respect, even when they are different from them or they disagree with them" came as the least practiced (rank seven) in this element.

Table 10. Means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample to the questionnaire’s items in the dimension of transparency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Competency-based learning (CBL) Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I consistently make clear pre-determined course competencies and learning objectives to my students from the very beginning.</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>.729</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mastery of course competencies is defined for students from the very beginning.</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I consistently inform my students and explain to them how their work will be assessed for each course competency.</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I consistently help my students understand how the course competencies will help them in their future life after graduation.</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I provide my students with a rubric to know how they are progressing on each course competency.</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 demonstrates that teaching practices of EFL faculty at the NBU, concerning improvement of skills and positive dispositions or holistic development, are generally low with an obtained mean score of 2.006 and with a standard deviation of 0.826. These practices as such do not support competency-based learning. The table shows that "defining mastery of the course competencies for students from the very beginning" came at the top of their teaching practices (rank one) in this element of competency-based learning. On the other hand, "helping students to understand how the course competencies will help them in their future life after graduation" came as the least practiced (rank five) in this element.

Thus, the teaching practices of EFL faculty at the NBU, concerning all elements of competency-based learning are generally low. These practices as such do not support competency-based learning.

*Answer to the Third Question*

As stated earlier in this study, the third question asked: ‘to what extent do EFL course descriptions support competency-based learning at the NBU?’ To answer this question, participants' responses to the seventh dimensions of the questionnaire are presented:
Table 11. Means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample to the questionnaire’s items in the dimension of course description.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Competency-based learning (CBL) Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Competencies around which the course was built were identified through a partnership between NBU faculty and employers in the labor market.</td>
<td>1.670</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Course competencies are aligned with the NBU core competencies.</td>
<td>1.594</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Course competencies are broken down into specific competencies or identified measurable skills, abilities and qualifications students are expected to demonstrate.</td>
<td>1.708</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Prescribed learning activities with clear instructions help achieve the course competencies and learning objectives.</td>
<td>1.604</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Links, if any, with other courses that contribute to developing the same course competencies are clearly shown.</td>
<td>1.576</td>
<td>.690</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rigorous ongoing assessments with detailed rubrics are designed specifically to measure students' mastery of each competency with specific assessment criteria.</td>
<td>1.736</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mastery requirements of each course competency are evidently specified.</td>
<td>1.604</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Accessibility of learning resources, that supports the achievement of the course competencies and learning objectives, whether on or off-campus, is clearly described.</td>
<td>1.718</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>V. Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Clear instructions on how and when to access the course faculty for academic support are plainly provided.</td>
<td>3.651</td>
<td>1.219</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1.873</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 shows that EFL faculty at the NBU consider course descriptions at the NBU are not supportive of competency-based learning. They rated them as being generally low with an obtained mean score of 1.873 and with a standard deviation of 0.781. The table shows that "providing clear instructions on how and when to access the course faculty for academic support" was the most rated as supportive of competency-based learning by those faculty. It came at the first rank (rank one). On the other hand, "showing clear links, if any, with other courses that contribute to developing the same course competencies" was rated as the least supportive of competency-based learning (rank nine).
Discussion

In general, this study attempted to identify EFL faculty awareness level of competency-based learning and the extent to which their teaching practices, as well as EFL course descriptions used, support competency-based education. Thus, the results and conclusion of this study are hoped to help in the adequate implementation of Competency-Based Learning at the NBU, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As shown by the results of this study, the overall awareness level of competency-based learning among NBU faculty is medium. It seems that they had a shaky knowledge of competency-based learning. They failed to show a deeper understanding of the principles of competency-based learning. Their pedagogical beliefs seem to be oriented to the traditional fixed-time system of instruction. In this respect, Curry and Docherty (2017) put it clear that all of us aspire to have highly qualified graduates, equipped with innovative knowledge and competencies, capable of responding to the increasing needs of the labor market in a rapidly changing world. Yet, many of us struggle with the awareness, skills and attitudes required to define, identify, deliver, measure and modify those essential competencies across learning situations and into teaching professions. Therefore, competency-based learning forces us to change our accustomed pedagogical beliefs and behaviors.

This result is in line with the results of the study of Kafyulilo, Rugambuka and Moses (2012) which concluded that most teachers in Tanzania had difficulties in explaining some competency based concepts. This result also confirms the results of Kabombwe’ and Mulenga’s (2019) study which showed that most teachers surveyed were not conversant with what competency-based learning is.

Results also showed that the teaching practices of EFL faculty at the NBU, concerning all elements of competency-based learning are generally low. Their teaching practices as such do not support competency-based learning. They do not support any of the elements of competency-based learning mentioned in this study (progression through demonstration of mastery of competencies, personalized instruction, flexible assessment, holistic development and transparency). These results are consistent with those of Benjamin (2014) and Kabombwe and Mulenga (2019) which showed that most teachers seem not to implement competency-based learning approach and that they were still using teacher-centered methods compatible with the traditional content-based curriculum.

Keeping in mind the previous result, this result is an expected one. The teaching practices of NBU faculty are expected not to be supportive of competency-based learning as they showed shaky awareness of competency-based learning principles. This is not surprising since it is assumed that good performance is a result of good thought/knowledge (Curry & Docherty, 2017). Supporting this, Kabombwe and Mulenga (2019) claim that a lack of knowledge of competency-based learning among teachers hinders successful implementation.

Results also showed that the course descriptions at the NBU do not support competency-based learning. They do not reflect particular specifications required for competency-based learning. For example, courses at the NBU were not built around specific competencies, identified through a partnership between NBU faculty and employers in the labor market and not adjusted to student learning needs. Besides, detailed rubrics required for rigorous ongoing
assessments for measuring students' mastery of each competency were lacking in the course descriptions at the NBU.

In this respect, Curry and Docherty (2017) assure that competency-based learning study plans must be routinely designed and pre-learning assessments should be done in order for recognizing the knowledge and skills already possessed by students for minimizing the amount of time spent on areas already mastered. However, Simonds, Behrens and Holzbauer (2017) assert that there is lack of literature on competency-based course design because designing competency-based courses is highly time-consuming and labor-intensive.

**Conclusion**

Paving the way for adequate research-informed implementation of competency-based learning, this study was performed to investigate the awareness level of competency-based learning among EFL faculty and the extent to which their teaching practices, as well as EFL course descriptions used, support competency-based learning at the NBU, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The overall awareness level of competency-based learning among NBU faculty proved medium and was reflected in their teaching practices. This indicates that those faculty are not sufficiently aware of the principles of competency-based learning. It is necessary, therefore, for the NBU to help raise the awareness of its faculty before embarking in the implementation of competency-based learning. This can be achieved through holding orientation seminars, awareness-raising meetings and training sessions for those faculty on the approaches of competency-based learning. Moreover, course descriptions used by scientific departments as such proved not to be supportive to competency-based learning therefore, a thorough review of program study plans and course design at the NBU is badly needed before implementing competency-based learning.

Further research, in needed to identify competencies required by students after graduation through a partnership with employers in the labor-market. More research is also needed to investigate the potential challenges of competency-based learning implementation at the NBU. Besides, further descriptive research is also need offer the practical ways of training faculty in competency-based approaches and competency-based course design.

**Acknowledgments**
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References


Investigating Competency-Based Learning Implementation

Hassanein


English As Secondary Language Learning and Autism Spectrum Disorder: The Obstacles in Teaching and Learning the Language

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Abstract
To this date, there has been an increasing number of children across the globe diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. There has been much literature that discussed the issues and obstacles common learners face in their English language learning journey. Yet, not much spotlight and acknowledgment were given to the learners with Autism in their voyage of English language learning. In conjunction to that, this paper intends to investigate the obstacles that the learners with Autism face in their English as secondary language learning. In addition to that, teachers are not to be forgotten as teachers are also believed to be playing a role in learners with Autism’s English as a second language (ESL) learning process which is why this research also intends to investigate the challenges faced by the teachers who are in charge of teaching learners with Autism. A qualitative research with the observation and interview as the instruments represents this research. This research involved two Autism Centres located in an urban area in Malaysia. The observation and interviews were conducted with forty-five learners with Autism and fourteen teachers. The findings have gathered that the world of Autism Spectrum Disorder is indeed full of obstacles and challenges but none that could not be overcome. It is believed that this research will provide a better insight of the real world of ESL teaching and learning among learners with Autism. Discussions and recommendations are further explained in this research.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, challenges, English as Secondary Language, language learning, obstacles

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Introduction

To date, an increasing number of children across the globe are diagnosed with Autism in which Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), according to Happe & Frith (2020), causes a child to experience persistent problems in social communication and interactions across multiple contexts as well as show restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities. These symptoms can be categorized into mild and severe symptoms, where higher levels require more support in daily life (Koo, Gaul, Rivera, Pan & Fong 2018). As we move towards UNESCO’s sustainable development goals (in which number four lays emphasizes on inclusion of education via quality education), there is an urgent need for learning to be inclusive regardless of special needs, especially children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) (UNESCO, 2017). Education Act (1996) has specifically defined that special education students are students with learning disabilities such as sight, hearing, speech, Down Syndrome, mild Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity (ADHD), minimal mental disorder retardation and dyslexia. According to Salleh (2019), inclusion of children with disabilities has been increasing worldwide since the declaration on “Education for All” in Jomtien; Thailand in 1990 and in a conference in Salamanca; Spain on Special Needs Education.

Malaysia has taken the initiative to be one of the 164 signatory countries that affirmed “Education for All” and has included inclusion in the National Education Blueprint 2013-2025 as part of the effort to achieve caring Malaysian slogan in Vision 2020 (Salleh, 2019). The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 ensure inclusivity which includes students with visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech difficulties, learning disabilities such as Autism, etc (Ministry Of Education (MOE), 2013; Khairuddin, Salleh & Amin, 2020). Ministry of Education Malaysia has implemented “Zero Reject Policy”, which requires schools to accept children with disabilities to ensure that no children with disabilities are to be left behind (Othman & Rahmat, 2020). UNICEF, in its research on “Childhood Disability in Malaysia; A Study of Knowledge; Attitudes and Practices” in 2016 has gathered that practices of inclusion, however, are not widely accepted in Malaysia due to teachers’ limited knowledge and skills in handling children with disabilities (Ramakrishnan, Salleh, & Alias, 2020). In the global and local landscapes, a pressing issue has been illustrated, in which the underprivileged community, especially children with special needs, are left behind (Shin et al., 2020) When it comes to education, especially English language learning in Malaysian context, Teo, Lau and Then (2020) mentioned that both children on the spectrum and educators tend to face obstacles with their English language teaching and learning process. This paper intends to provide significance to the parties that are relevant to the education world which are the policymakers and also teachers. Learners with Autism are unique in their ways and they also go through the same learning journey as mainstream learners regardless of their unique condition. There have been many literatures that discussed the issues and obstacles faced by mainstream learners in their ESL learning. Yet, not much spotlight and acknowledgment are given to the learners with Autism in their voyage of English language learning.

In conjunction with that, this research aims to investigate the obstacles faced by 1. The learners of Autism in their English as secondary language (ESL) learning process and 2. The teachers in teaching English as a secondary language (ESL) learning to the learners with Autism. The research is underpinned by two research questions; 1. What are the challenges and obstacles
learners with autism face with their ESL learning process and 2. What are the challenges and obstacles teachers usually encounter during their ESL teaching process?

**Literature Review**

**Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or widely known in short as Autism, is a spectrum disorder identified by various characteristics, which usually includes perceptual, cognitive, and social differences (Bosseler & Massaro, 2003; American Psychiatric Association, 1996; Rahman et al., 2020). Khowaja et al., (2019) mentioned that American Psychiatric Association defined autism spectrum disorder as a neurological disorder which diagnosed child may face difficulty in social communication or have a repeated or restricted set of behaviors (Porters, Vieira, Souza, 2020; Hannan, Satari, Abu, & Yunus, 2020). Among the significant characteristics, most of the children with Autism have limited ability to produce and comprehend spoken language. Autism is seen as a mental disability instead of a psychiatric illness, and children as autism learners usually require a particular education process instead of tools that can assist them in their basic social, communication and reasoning skills (Luneski, Konstanidis, Hitoglou-Antoniadou, & Bamidis, 2008).

According to Skewes, Kemp, Paton and Hohwy (2020), another trait of children with Autism is that they learn through repetitions and one of the ways for them to grasp the learning process is via repetitions.

Busby, Ingram, Bowron, Oliver and Lyons (2012) mentioned that it is crucial for both educators and teachers to feel competent in teaching children with Autism. In their research on addressing teacher challenges and preparation needs in teaching elementary children with Autism, they have discovered that many general educators frequently expressed their misgivings about teaching children with Autism. In some studies, it is shown that some teachers believe that teaching children with Autism should be the scope job of the special educators. This then leads to the teachers to feel incompetent in handling children with Autism. Busby et al., (2012) believed that adequate training should be provided to the teachers to help increase their sense of self-efficacy. When the teachers begin to feel competent in their abilities to teach children with Autism, they may be more motivated and engaged in their responsibilities of teaching these children.

According to Notbohm and Zysk (2006), Autism is a highly complex disorder and there is no way for us to generalize Autism or children with Autism. Each child will be at a different point of the spectrum and child or adult, each will have a unique set of needs (Hannan, Satari, Abu & Yunus, 2020). Notbohm and Zysk (2006) indirectly stated some of the familiar characteristics and traits of children with Autism. Some of the traits are:

- Their sensory perceptions are disorder
- Receptive and expressive language and vocabulary can be massive challenges for them
- They are concrete thinkers which means they interpret language literally
- They have limited vocabulary. It is always hard for them to express what they feel
- They are very visually oriented. They learn best through pictures and also repetitions
- They usually encounter trouble with social interactions
- They will meltdown and throw tantrums which might have caused by overload senses
English for Autism and Its Importance

Learning a language is a thorough process (Lord, Brugha, Charman, Cusack, Dumas, Frazier & Taylor 2020; Dornyei, 2019) and for children at a preschool level, their process of language learning is just a starter. The starter for their language learning should not be taken lightly as it plays a significant role when they are about to develop their language learning through time. Both parents and teachers play in role in helping learners with Autism with their voyage of language learning (Chu, Mohd, Mc Connell, Tan & Joginder, 2020). English language learning consists of a few mastery skills namely, reading; writing; speaking; listening; grammar and vocabulary. Both learners and educators sometimes tend to forget and ignore the importance of English vocabulary development.

English language is no longer a stranger now in today’s era of globalization. In Malaysian context, ESL learning has to become a rising issue in the Malaysian Education System (Adan & Hashim 2021). Majority now has gotten full awareness on the importance of English language (Symons & Ponzi, 2019). English language is now the global language which is used by everyone all around the world. In most developed countries, even English language has become the second language that needs to be learned by the learners since preschool. Kaprva (2019) in her documentation research on the importance of English in the modern world has figured that English language functions as the medium for all aspects of living such as globalization, education, career, travel, culture and even in technologies. In the education field, English is now a language of education (Chandran & Hashim 2021). Children will start to learn English language from preschool up until in their phase tertiary education level. The learning and acquisition of English language will provide them with a more significant opportunity for good education and a successful career.

One of the best ways learners with mild Autism can learn best is via images and pictures as according to Büyük, Nizam, Akgül and Çamurcu (2019), they are more attracted to images. The term related to children with Autism is ‘Social Stories”. Ghanouni et al., (2018), in their research, mentioned that social stories play a role as a method of teaching that facilitate the understanding of the social context that a child might find difficult to interpret, which leads them to have a better learning process. Previous studies have shown that social stories can improve understanding social situations, inferring perspectives of others and demonstrating appropriate behavior. Satari, Yasin, Toran and Mohamed (2020) believed that early intervention is required as early as possible for learners with Autism as it is intended to help learners to master basic skills that are appropriate and suitable to the learners’ needs.

Methods

This paper employed a qualitative design of research where observation with field notes and interviews are used as the instruments. The respondents for this research include forty-five learners of Autism and fourteen teachers teaching learners with Autism were involved. This research is conducted at two Autism centers in an urban area located in Selangor, Malaysia. The learners were in their preschool level of education with the mild condition of Autism with the range of age between 7-10 years old. The data collection procedures were conducted through observation using field notes as instrument to observe the learning environment of learners with Autism. The observation is conducted to observe what are the challenges faced by the learners in their ESL learning process. In addition to that, interviews are also conducted with the teachers...
who are in charge of teaching the learners with Autism. The interviews were conducted to get an insight into what the teachers usually face and encounter during their teaching process involving the learners with Autism. The interviews were conducted with the teachers who were teaching the learners with Autism at the centers. Both observation and interviews conducted were aimed to investigate the obstacles faced by both the learners and teachers in their English as secondary language learning and teaching process. The data collected from both observation and interviews were then analyzed thematically.

Findings
The data gathered in this research via observation and interviews were then later categorized and discussed thematically into two sub-themes of findings namely; 1. The challenges faced by learners with mild Autism in their language learning journey and 2. The challenges faced by the teachers concerning to their teaching process.

The Challenges Faced by Learners with Mild Autism in their Language Learning Journey
Based on the findings, it can be seen that learners with Autism commonly demonstrate difficulties in responding and initiating social interactions. They usually struggle to provide responses and interact with other people. Due to their cognitive disabilities, most learners with Autism struggle to acquire new vocabulary. Learners with Autism mostly tend to grasp English language faster than their mother tongue language. According to the Special Education field expert, learners with Autism will acquire English words and language more quickly due to the linguistic aspect of English language. In comparison to the other languages, English language is more straightforward and has less amount of syllables which makes it even easier for learners with Autism to grasp the language. Regardless, learners with Autism still encounter difficulties in learning and acquiring the language as the process is not a straightforward process for every learner. Every learner has their own styles of learning, also preferences in acquiring a language primarily English language. This applies the same to the learners with Autism. They also learn differently and each one of them differs in terms of learning styles and learning preferences.

The findings have also gathered that learning can be a very challenging process for children with Autism at their early childhood phase due to their cognitive disability. As children with Autism are primarily visual learners, one of the best ways they can learn best is via images and pictures. The term related to learners with Autism is ‘Social Stories”. Social stories play a role as a method of teaching to help facilitate the understanding of the social context that a child might find difficult to interpret.

The Challenges Faced by the Teachers in regard to their Teaching Process
Teachers play a crucial role in teaching children with Autism. Due to the different behaviors and characteristics of Autism learners, the findings have gathered that some teachers struggle in trying to personalize the teaching and learning materials depending on the learner’s preferences. Sometimes, due to time constraint and teachers shortage, teachers in charge need to be able to try to adapt and adopt the materials depending on the learners’ preferences. Teachers also sometimes need to customize their own materials in order to get the learners’ motivation and attention to learn. The findings have figured out that teachers face this issue as they find it tiring to keep on repeating the teaching and learning process every day. The tear and wear condition of
the hardcopy teaching aids handmade by the teachers are to be regarded as not one of the best teaching and learning aids for learners with Autism.

Discussion

Based on all the findings gathered on the challenges faced by both teachers and learners with Autism in their teaching and learner process, it is evident that they encounter struggles that need to be taken into consideration by related parties. Khowaja et al., (2019) in their research mentioned how the American Psychiatric Association defined autism spectrum disorder. According to them, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological disorder due to which diagnosed child may face difficulty in social communication or have a repeated or restricted set of behaviors. Buyuk et al., (2019) also believed that learners with Autism are mostly visual strategy learners and they tend to learn better through pictures and images. Previous studies have shown that social stories can improve understanding social situations, inferring perspectives of others and demonstrating appropriate behavior among learners with Autism. In conjunction to that, it is believed that a developed module that consists of social stories and images will help to increase learners with Autism’s motivation and interest in the language learning process. Notbohm (2005) agreed that Autism is a highly complex disorder and learners with Autism indeed differ among them and each one of them behaves differently and prefers different things. In addition to that, another trait of children with Autism is that they learn through repetitions (Skewes et al., 2020).

Conclusion and Implication

As a global language, the importance and use of English language can no longer be denied. Both mainstream learners and learners with Autism can practice English language in their life in the long run. Education in today’s world should involve everyone including special needs learners. Learners with Autism are believed to be able to get the same treatment and inclusion as mainstream learners. There has not been much spotlight given to both teachers who are involved with the learners with Autism and the learners with Autism themselves in trying to understand their ESL teaching and learning process. In the effort of bridging the gap and providing equality of education to both mainstream learners and learners with Autism, the very least thing is to get an insight of their world and find out of the challenges and obstacles in their ESL learning. The findings gathered from this paper can be helpful to provide related parties; policymakers, teachers and even parents to have an idea of what its like in the world of learners with Autism which then, helps them to be able to provide these learners with more opportunities to improve their learning journey. This research proposes to provide an insight into what learners with Autism and the teachers face in their journey of learning, also teaching English as a secondary language.

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Impoliteness and Threat Responses in an Iraqi-Kurdish EFL Context

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Abstract
This study shows impoliteness as a form of face-threatening that can be intentionally caused by verbal threats in a particular setting. It investigates: what strategies and mitigators do Iraqi-Kurdish English as a foreign language (EFL) learners use in situations of threat responses? The present investigation paper aims to examine impoliteness strategies and mitigators by these learners when they respond to threatening situations in their context. Thus, it fills a gap in pragmatics literature by investigating the reactions to threats in an Iraqi-Kurdish EFL context. To this end, 50 participants have participated in this study. An open-ended questionnaire in the form of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) is used to elicit responses from the participants. Besides, a focus group interview is conducted to support the data analysis. The data are coded based on Limberg’s (2009) model of impoliteness and threat responses to figure out the strategies used by the learners. Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper’s (1989) taxonomy of mitigators is adapted to analyze the mitigators. Overall, the findings reveal that the preferred responses surpass those which indicate dispreference by the learners. They tend to use face-saving acts when they comply with the threatener’s demand and opt for face-threatening acts when they reject that demand indirectly. Moreover, these learners use mitigators to attenuate the illocutionary force of their responses. Finally, this study provides some recommendations and pedagogical implications.

Keywords: Impoliteness, Iraqi-Kurdish EFL context, mitigators, responses to threats, social power

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Introduction

The issue of face attack and how the addressee responds to it should be taken into account because it is one aspect of impoliteness that causes conflict. Threats do not only threaten the addressee’s face but rather the speaker’s face can also be damaged by verbal threats in case the hearer does not comply with the desired action or replies aggressively. A threat can be viewed as a communicative strategy by which the threatener intentionally uses it to create conflict with the addressee. This act possibly creates an extreme procedure of impolite behavior and can be used as a face-threatening strategy that intentionally aims to ensure hearers’ compliance in a particular context. For doing so, the addressee faces negative consequences in case s/he does not show cooperation. The threat can be considered an impolite behavior in two ways: (i) the threatener intentionally initiates it regardless of the target’s face concerns, and (ii) both interlocutors interactively create impoliteness in a particular setting although one speaker produces the threat (Limberg 2009).

Due to the issue that threats are like an inherent aggressive social activity (Geluykens & Limberg, 2012) and they intrinsically threaten the hearer’s negative and positive face, they are deemed as face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). They are illocutionary acts (Fraser, 1975) and essentially impolite (Leech, 1983). They are ferocious and rude in their nature unless they are utilized facetiously (Harris, 1984).

The current study fills a gap in pragmatics literature by investigating impoliteness in response to threatening situations in a new EFL context not examined before (i.e., Iraqi-Kurdish EFL context). Following Limberg’s (2009) research, this study examines impoliteness strategies and mitigators by Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners when they respond to threatening situations performed intentionally in their context. The current research focuses not only on the threat as one of the speech acts but rather on the sequence that consists of a threat and the response it follows in real-life situations. It seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What strategies do Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners use in situations of threat responses?
2. What mitigators do Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners use in situations of threat responses?

Literature Review

Interlanguage pragmatics is concerned with using the target language by non-native speakers (Félix-Brasdefer, 2017). It is a subfield of interlanguage research investigating the production and perception of speech acts by second language learners in a target setting (Schauer, 2009). The main framework in interlanguage pragmatics is represented by speech act theory (Félix-Brasdefer, 2017). The theory of speech acts is originated by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969, 1979). Austin (1962) found out that we do things verbally when we produce words. One major thing we do via means of language is to try to affect people into actions that suit them, us, or both of us (Pérez-Hernández, 2021). The theory of speech acts focuses on the difference between ‘illocutionary force’ and ‘propositional content.’ Every speech act can be analyzed into force and content which differ separately from one another (Hanks, 2018). The speech act is a substantial part of pragmatics, which focuses on the intended meaning of an utterance (Cutting, 2002; Fairclough, 1989). However, Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) proposed two salient concepts of pragmatics: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. The former is concerned with the particular linguistic resources that language users have in a specific context for convening particular illocutions. The latter refers to knowledge about the social norms in
specific situations and how the speakers properly utilize the linguistic resources in a second language social setting (Barron, 2003; Félix-Brasdefer, 2017; Leech, 1983).

Based on Oxford English Dictionary (OED Online) (2020), a threat is defined as “a declaration of hostile determination or of loss, pain, punishment, or damage to be inflicted in retribution for or conditionally upon some course.” In addition, the act of threatening is well-defined as the act that is performed to pressure, urge, and convince someone via means of menaces.

Some approaches are closely developed by Fraser (1998) and Storey (1995) after proposing the ‘felicity conditions’ by Searle (1969). The illocutionary act of threatening is defined by Fraser (1998) as that one performed intentionally by a speaker via an utterance under three conditions: (1) the speaker aims to commit the act intentionally, (2) the speaker believes that the addressee will face unwanted consequences, and (3) the speaker’s purpose is to frighten the addressee by making him/her aware of the aim in the first condition.

In the same vein, Storey (1995) illustrated three basic types of threats: (1) ‘warning threats,’ which notify the addressee of probable consequences of specific performance, but are eventually to the addressee’s advantage, (2) ‘pure threats,’ which help the speaker by forcing the addressee to perform something, and (3) ‘frightening threats,’ which can be used for the same purpose of the latter type, but no coercion is included.

It is worth mentioning that the addressee uses threats when s/he performs an improper behavior. This behavior either influences the speaker’s threat or infers with his/her responsibilities. The threaten potentially uses the threat to make the addressee complies with his/her threat. Thus, s/he aims to manipulate the addressee’s behavior by displaying the intention of using negative consequences if the threat is refused. Performing such actions intensely influences the target’s response. Yet, the threat is probable to fail in case the addressee thinks that the threaten is bluffing (Limberg, 2008, 2009).

There are conditional and non-conditional threats. The former refers to the speaker’s restriction against the addressee and to the negative results that the speaker will impose on the addressee. As for non-conditional threats, the choice between accomplishing the speaker’s demand and refusing the threat, but tolerating the expected consequences, requires a possible face loss. However, it depends on the context and the degree of power to decide which of the two options is less face-threatening (Limberg, 2009).

Verbal threats are hybrid verbs because of their linguistic and non-linguistic nature (Vanderveken, 1990). They are available in diverse linguistic forms, but none of them are fundamentally improper. That is to say, it is related to the decisions speakers make according to the social values of appropriateness. These values might differ with regard to three parameters: social, contextual, and cultural. Except for the social value of behavior, interlocutors’ anticipations and interactional aims also affect speakers’ decisions on a verbal strategy whether it is offensive, impolite, or something else. A case in point is that example: “If you don’t move your car, I will have to give you a ticket.” In this example, one may debate that the threat is proper due to two issues: the triggering action that the driver does by parking illegally and the
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Ali

authority the policeman has to reprimand the offensive behavior. Such a reaction in this presupposed context is socially and legally appropriate; yet, this speech act cannot be considered an ordinary form of performance in social interactions. It is attributed to the issue that it involves a face-aggravation as threats communicate social dissatisfaction and restrict hearers’ action settings. The hearer must move his/her car at once or pay a fine due to the policeman’s demand. This strategy can be assessed in a particular setting by inferring the hearer’s response to the threat. If the threatened driver complies with the policeman, this means that s/he accepts the face attack, and if s/he rejects, the policeman performs an adverse reaction towards his/her face concerns. However, certain situations often stimulate aggressive responses from the target individual and sometimes cause an exacerbation of the conflict. This shows that the target understands the verbal threat as an impolite attack on his/her face (Limberg, 2009).

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviors caused by at least one individual (Kadhum & Abbas, 2020). Judgments on impoliteness are affected by such social variables as power, distance, age, gender, and culture (Kuha, 2003). Power is frequently interrelated with politeness (Abbas, 2013) and impoliteness (Lakoff, 1989). It is a supportive means to confirm direct compliance but it is not always necessary for making a threat utterance successful (Limberg, 2009).

Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness paved the way for scholars to study the concept of impoliteness (Mohammed & Abbas, 2016). As a result, Culpeper (1996, 2005) investigated impoliteness based on the theory mentioned above. Five strategies of impoliteness are proposed: ‘bald on record impoliteness,’ ‘positive impoliteness,’ ‘negative impoliteness,’ ‘sarcasm or mock politeness,’ and ‘withhold politeness.’ According to Limberg (2009), verbal threats had not been explicitly stated in Culpeper’s list of strategies. They are associated with some of the output strategies, such as ‘frighten,’ ‘emphasizing your relative power,’ and ‘invading the other’s space,’ and listed under ‘negative impoliteness’ (Culpeper, 1996). The conditional threats suggested by Limberg (2009) aim to manipulate the hearer’s performance in that s/he is reluctantly obliged to conduct an action. These threats would associate with the output strategies proposed by Culpeper (1996), which are utilized to damage the hearers’ negative face wants. Acting by force would restrict the hearer’s freedom of action. In this case, threats do not only create a form of negative impoliteness, but rather they threaten the hearer’s positive face wants via refusal, dislike, and shortage of understanding. Therefore, it is hard to categorize threats as an output strategy in the proposed framework of Culpeper (Limberg, 2009).

Limberg (2009) examined the threats from an impoliteness perspective. That is, impoliteness strategies are investigated in the addressees’ responses to verbal threats in real-life situations. His framework is a revised version of Limberg’s (2003) and Limberg and Geluykens’s (2007) frameworks. A DCT is used and 1200 responses are collected from 212 English native speakers to examine the hearers’ tendency in a particular conflict situation. The developed framework refers to the function and use of the reactions and the conflict performances of the addressees. The findings unveil that the participants mainly use ‘toward compliance’ or ‘toward non-compliance’ strategies. They tend to use the preferred responses more than the dispreferred responses. Besides, the participants’ responses show a higher degree of ‘compliance’ and ‘toward compliance’ to threats produced by an individual of equal status. The categories do not show (im)polite values correlated with responses. Yet, the ‘toward
compliance’ and ‘compliance’ categories indicate a face-saving quality while the ‘toward non-compliance’ and ‘non-compliance’ categories can be wholly face-threatening and dispreferred behavior.

Furthermore, interlocutors might produce mitigators to reduce the face threatening of their utterances. These mitigators are internal and external devices occurring in diverse speech acts such as request, apology, refusal, gratitude, etc. Likewise, the responses to threats can be mitigated by mitigators to modify the head act internally and externally. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), the internal mitigators are either syntactic or lexical/phrasal devices occurring within the head act to mitigate it internally, while the external devices are supportive moves that can be used before and/or after the head act to modify it externally. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012, p. 191) revealed that “external modifiers tend to be syntactically less demanding and pragmalinguistically less complex as they usually involve the construction of a new, often syntactically simple clause.” Hassall (2001, 2012) also shows the same remark when concluding similar results.

However, a great deal of studies investigated the offensive language in different genres such as media (Jan & How, 2015), political talk (Al-Khazaali & Al-Hindawi, 2016; Garcia-Pastor, 2008), legal discourse (Kuntsi, 2012), Facebook political discourse (Halim, 2015), military context (Culpeper, 1996), literary perspective (Rudanko, 2006), computer-mediated communication (Zhong, 2018), online football comments (Wibowo & Kuntjara, 2012), and ESL/EFL context (Mugford, 2007). Moreover, several scholars investigated the concept of impoliteness in diverse languages such as British (Lucky, 2015), Japanese (Nishimura, 2010), English (Limberg, 2009), Malay (Alias & Yahaya, 2019), Chinese (Zhong, 2018), Spanish (Marco, 2008), English and Arabic (Hammod & Rassul, 2017), German (House, 2010), and Persian (Mirhosseini, Mardanshahi, & Dowlatabadi, 2017).

Yet, Farnia and Sheibani (2019, p. 69) stated that “few studies have drawn their attention to the impoliteness in the threatening situations… In other words, few studies have investigated addressee’s responses to verbal threats (e.g., Geluykens & Limberg, 2012; Limberg, 2009).” Based upon this view, the current study fills a gap in pragmatics literature. It examines impoliteness in response to threatening situations in the Iraqi-Kurdish EFL context, which has not been conducted on particular research so far.

**Methods**

**Research Design**

Quantitative and qualitative data can be collected and analyzed in mixed-methods research design (Creswell, 2015). The current study uses mixed-methods research design. It integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach is represented by the DCT to collect the learners’ responses and interpret them via descriptive statistics. The qualitative approach is used via the focus group interview to support the data analysis.

**Participants**

The current study is conducted on the Iraqi-Kurdish EFL context during October 2020. The participants are Kurds who are native speakers of Kurdish. They live in Koysinjaq district in Erbil governorate in the north of Iraq, the region of Iraqi Kurdistan. A random sampling method
is used to select 50 Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners (27 males and 23 females), ranging in age from 20 to 23 years. All of them are undergraduate university English learners at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Koya University, Erbil, Iraq. They have not visited or lived in an English-speaking country before. They have participated voluntarily, and their names are kept confidential.

**Instruments**

The instruments of this study are used by the researcher via google classroom due to COVID 19. A background questionnaire is first given to the participants. This instrument is used in the form of a questionnaire written in English. It aims to elicit data about the participants’ personal information such as age, gender, etc. (refer to Appendix A). Besides, the data of this study are collected by an open-ended questionnaire in the form of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) (refer to Appendix B). Limberg’s (2009) DCT is adapted to suit the context of the learners. This procedure is conducted after asking some learners about the salient threatening situations they always face in their daily life. They have stated that most of Limberg’s scenarios are available in their context except for no. four changed to be between professor and student. Thus, the DCT includes six scenarios that are culturally specific in the Iraqi-Kurdish context. The scenarios involve a brief description of different situations written in English, followed by the threatener’s threat, to which the learners are asked to respond. The social power of the speaker is dissimilar in these situations: higher, equal, and lower social power.

Moreover, these situations have been validated by experts in the context. Test-retest is applied to confirm the reliability result (81%). The researcher has explained the aim of the study and the situations to the participants before conducting the DCT. The learners’ responses are taken verbatim in this study. Besides, a focus group interview is conducted via google meet on another day to support the data analysis. The interview comprises specific questions related to the learners’ responses to threatening situations.

**Data analysis**

The researcher has coded the data based on Limberg’s (2009) model of impoliteness and threat responses, as illustrated in Table one. It involves five categories (‘compliance,’ ‘toward compliance,’ ‘open-ended,’ ‘toward non-compliance,’ and ‘non-compliance’). Blum-Kulka et al.’s (1989) taxonomy of internal and external devices is adapted to analyze the mitigators, as shown in Table two. The internal devices are modifiers occurring within the head act to modify it internally. They involve syntactic downgraders (such as ‘interrogative’ and ‘conditional clause’) and lexical/phrasal downgraders (such as ‘politeness marker’ and ‘appealer’). The external devices are supportive moves that occur before and/or after the head act to modify it externally, such as ‘grounder,’ ‘promise,’ and ‘imposition minimizer.’ The ‘apology’ mitigator is added to the external devices because it is unavailable in the original taxonomy. In addition, the data are analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency and percentage) to calculate the frequency of threatening responses. The researcher has consulted two inter-raters of pragmatics to code the data, and the reliability result is 83%.
Table 1. Description of threatening response categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threatening Response Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>“A response that signals the target’s (purported) intention or willingness to comply with threatener’s demands will be taken as a form of compliance,” e.g., “Sorry, I’ll move it for you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward compliance</td>
<td>“These utterances are not as explicit and straightforward in terms of the speaker’s response tendency as those instances in the C and NC category because they often combine different strategies,” e.g., “I don’t think you understand I’m extremely [sic] late but if you want me to move it’s not a problem.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td>“… is included to account for those instances that are openly interpretable in terms of their illocutionary function and linguistic form,” e.g., “Can I just park here for just 5 minutes while I collect my parents, or is it absolutely necesssary [sic] for me to move?!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispreferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward non-compliance</td>
<td>“These utterances are not as explicit and straightforward in terms of the speaker’s response tendency as those instances in the C and NC category because they often combine different strategies,” e.g., “I’ll only be a minute. I’m late picking up my parents.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compliance</td>
<td>“A non-compliance response … potentially resulting in an unsuccessful threat which would then lead to further dispute,” e.g., “Give a ticket then.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. Adopted from Limberg (2009, pp. 1385-1387)

Table 2. Taxonomy of mitigators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Mitigator</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Devices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic Downgraders</td>
<td>“Is”.../ “Will”...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Clause</td>
<td>“If you want it”, ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical/phrasal Downgraders</td>
<td>“Please”...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness Marker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealer</td>
<td>“Ok”...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Devices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>“because I am too busy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise</td>
<td>“I promise...”/ “I will not do that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition Minimizer</td>
<td>“just for few minutes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>“I am sorry”/ “I apologize.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 2. Adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, pp. 281-288)

Results

Table three indicates that the vast majority of Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners prefer to use the ‘compliance’ strategy in situation one. 58% of the learners’ corpus includes ‘compliance’ strategy while 30% and 12% of their corpus involve ‘toward non-compliance’ and ‘toward-compliance’ strategies, respectively. The learners avoid using ‘open-ended’ and ‘non-compliance’ strategies in this situation. As for situation four, these learners highly resort to the ‘compliance’ strategy (98%) and sparingly use the ‘open-ended’ strategy (2%). Other strategies such as ‘toward- compliance,’ ‘toward non-compliance,’ and ‘non-compliance’ have not been available in the learners’ corpus. A closer look at the strategies used in situations one and four indicates that the most widely used strategy is ‘compliance’ (78%), followed by ‘toward non-
compliance’ (15%), ‘toward compliance’ (6%), and ‘open-ended’ (1%) strategies. Overall, the whole amount of preferred responses outweighs those which show dispreference in each situation and across the two situations. The examples below illustrate the learners’ responses in situations one and four where interlocutors have a higher social status:

Situation one:
“‘I am sorry officer, I will park my car somewhere else.’” (‘Compliance’)
“‘Please I need a minute because I am late to pick up my parents’” (‘Toward non-compliance’)
“I will leave so soon after picking up my parents’” (‘Toward compliance’)

Situation four:
“I understand I will take the exam and delay the family picnic to another day.’” (‘Compliance’)
“I will take the exam’” (‘Compliance’)
“Can I postpone the exam or it is necessary?” (‘Open-ended’)

Table 3. Distribution of strategies in situations one & four (higher social status)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Situation 1</th>
<th>Situation 4</th>
<th>Situations 1 &amp; 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F &amp; (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward compliance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35 (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward non-compliance</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compliance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four illustrates that the ‘toward compliance’ strategy (54%) is more frequently used by the learners in situation 2. 28% of all responses comprises the ‘toward non-compliance’ strategy. In comparison, 10% and 8% involve ‘compliance’ and ‘non-compliance’ strategies respectively. As for the ‘open-ended’ strategy, it is quite avoided by the learners. The strategies used by the learners in situation five ranged from the most to the least common include ‘toward compliance’ (38%), ‘toward non-compliance’ (28%), ‘compliance’ (24%), ‘non-compliance’ (8%), and ‘open-ended’ (2%). Overall, the learners mainly opt for the ‘toward compliance’ strategy (46%) in situations two and five where the speakers have equal social status. They also use ‘toward non-compliance’ strategy (28%) more frequently than ‘compliance’ (17%), ‘non-compliance’ (8%), and ‘open-ended’ (1%) strategies. Importantly, these learners tend to use the preferred responses more often than the dispreferred ones in each situation and across the two situations. The examples below show the learners’ strategies in situations two and five:

Situation two:
“Sorry, Ahmed but please if you want it, give me some more time.” (‘Toward compliance’)
“You are absolutely right and I apologize.” (‘Compliance’)
“sorry I have no time.” (‘Non-compliance’)

Situation five:
“because i am totally busy today, please do the cleaning and I will do your chores next time.” (‘Toward compliance’)
“I am not the only one that live here I have lots of homework to do.” (‘Toward non-compliance’)
“I will clean it quickly.” (‘Compliance’)

Table 4. Distribution of strategies in situations two & five (equal social status)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Situation 2</th>
<th>Situation 5</th>
<th>Situations 2 &amp; 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F &amp; (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward compliance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>32 (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open-ended</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispreferred</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward non-compliance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compliance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table five indicates that ‘toward non-compliance’ strategy (52%) is more frequently used in situation three, followed by ‘non-compliance’ (28%), ‘compliance’ (10%), ‘toward compliance’ (8%), and ‘open-ended’ (2%) strategies. The strategies used by these learners in situation six ranged from the most to the least common comprise ‘toward compliance’ (40%), ‘toward non-compliance’ (36%), ‘compliance’ (12%), ‘non-compliance’ (10%), and ‘open-ended’ (2%). Overall, these learners have a tendency to use the ‘toward non-compliance’ strategy (44%) more often than other strategies across situations three and six where the speakers have a lower social status. They also opt for ‘toward compliance’ strategy (24%) more frequently than ‘non-compliance’ (19%), ‘compliance’ (11%), and ‘open-ended’ (2%) strategies. While these learners tend to use the dispreferred responses more often than the preferred responses in situation three, they opt for the opposite in situation six. However, the total amount of dispreferred responses surpasses those which reveal preference across the two situations. The examples below demonstrate the learners’ responses to the threatening situations three and six:

Situation three:
“Tell them and I will tell them you do bad things.” (‘Toward non-compliance’)
“No problem tell them.” (‘Non-compliance’)
“Please obey me and go to bed Adar, watching Tv for so long can be harmful for you” (‘Non-compliance’)
“I will let you watch it for some time then you have to sleep.” (‘Compliance’)
“I am sorry but I need to call my friend later I will allow you to watch it.” (‘Toward compliance’)

Situation six:
“You are right, but there is nothing wrong to the camera and I am sorry I take it without your permission I will not do that next time” (‘Toward compliance’)
“Actually you are not at home.” (‘Toward non-compliance’)
“You are right I had to ask your permission.” (‘Compliance’)
“I am older than you and there is no need for permission.” (‘Non-compliance’)

Table 5. Distribution of strategies in situations three & six (lower social status)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Situation 3</th>
<th>Situation 6</th>
<th>Situations 3 &amp; 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F &amp; (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward compliance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispreferred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward non-compliance</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compliance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table six unveils that the vast majority of Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners prefer to use the ‘compliance’ strategy (35%) across all situations. Results also uncover that ‘toward non-compliance’ (29%) and ‘toward compliance’ (25%) strategies constitute an extent where these learners show salience while they less often use ‘non-compliance’ (9%) and ‘open-ended’ (2%) strategies. Overall, the preferred responses (61%) surpass the dispreferred responses (38%) across all situations.

Table 6. Distribution of strategies across all situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward compliance</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispreferred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward non-compliance</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compliance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, Table seven displays the types of mitigators used by Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners across all situations. The ‘grounder’ (25%) and ‘apology’ (21%) are the most frequently used mitigators in the learners’ responses. Other types of mitigators are used with various frequencies, such as 14% of all responses shows a tendency towards ‘politeness marker,’ 12% towards ‘conditional clause,’ and 11% towards ‘promise.’ The incidence of ‘imposition minimizer’ (7%), ‘interrogative’ (5%) and ‘appealer’ (5%) is noticeably lower. Below are some examples of mitigators across all situations:

“Is (interrogative) it possible to stay for a while”
“Please (politeness marker) I need a minute because I am late to pick up my parents (grounder)”
“Ok (appealer) watch it, but just for few minutes (imposition minimizer)”
“Sorry, (apology) Ahmed but please (politeness marker) if you want it (conditional clause), give me some more time.”
“I am sorry officer, (apology) I will park my car somewhere else.”
“because i am totally busy today, (grounder) please (politeness marker) do the cleaning and I will do your chores next time.”
“You are right, but there is nothing wrong to the camera and I am sorry I take it without your permission (apology) I will not do that next time (promise)”
“Please (politeness marker) obey me and go to bed Adar, watching Tv for so long can be harmful for you (grounder)”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Mitigator</th>
<th>F &amp; (%)</th>
<th>F &amp; (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Devices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic Devices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>10 (5)</td>
<td>75 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional clause</td>
<td>25 (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical/Phrasal Devices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness marker</td>
<td>30 (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Devices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>53 (25)</td>
<td>135 (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise</td>
<td>23 (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition Minimizer</td>
<td>15 (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>44 (21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>210 (100)</td>
<td>210 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Based on the results and the interview, it has been remarked that Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners opt for ‘compliance’ strategy in situations one and four where the speaker is more potent than the hearer. The responses are more face-saving by the learners to comply with the threatener’s demand which culturally indicate respect to the person who is higher in his/her social status. The verbal threats in these situations are legitimate and dynamic strategies to guarantee compliance from the addressee. That is quite true in the Iraqi-Kurdistan context where
a policeman and a professor have authority and their demands should be complied with. The learners have decided to go along with the policeman’s threat and use an apparent compliance. Most of them have stated that they can go to the parking area in order not to pay a fine and they can call their parents to pick them up soon. This reaction is clarified by Limberg (2009) in that the hearer accepts the face attack to avoid any negative consequences that could be performed by the threatener. Similarly, these learners comply with their professor’s demand to take the exam because they can go with their family later on another day.

Besides, the ‘toward non-compliance’ strategy is more frequently used than the ‘toward compliance’ strategy by these learners in situation one. The diversity of responses, according to Farina and Sheibani (2019) and Limberg (2009), indicates that the learners have decided to either opt for an indirect refusal because they are mistreated by the policeman, or comply with the policeman’s threat clearly. However, ‘compliance’ and ‘toward non-compliance’ strategies are favored by the learners across the two situations. In addition, the majority of the learners tend to use more preferred responses (‘compliance’ and ‘toward compliance’) than dispreferred responses (‘toward non-compliance’ and ‘non-compliance’) in each situation and across the two situations. In other words, they prefer to use more face-saving acts when receiving threats from individuals who are higher in their social status. This result is consistent with Farina and Sheibani’s (2019) and Limberg’s (2009) results because native English speakers produce more preferred responses than dispreferred ones in situations where interlocutors have a higher social status.

Results uncover that ‘toward compliance’ is the most salient strategy in situations two and five where interlocutors are equal in their status. Power is a significant social variable that influences the addressees’ responses and their use of strategies. These learners do not like to escalate the conflict because their social relationship and mutual friendship are more important than trivial issues as proofreading a paper or cleaning the flat. Farina and Sheibani (2019) and Limberg (2009) have demonstrated that a friend mainly tends to comply with a threat produced by his/her well-acquainted friend to avoid conflict and keep their friendship. However, the learners opt for counterthreats and use ‘toward non-compliance’ as the second most often used strategy in their responses in both situations. It is clear that the learners’ priority is to choose a face-saving strategy and comply with a friend’s threat; yet, they opt for a face-threatening act when they find the threat offensive. They also tend to use the ‘compliance’ strategy because they understand that they should keep their promise in proofreading the paper and be committed to their duties when they share a flat with a friend. Overall, the preferred responses surpass the dispreferred ones due to the learners’ tendency to use face-saving strategies in situations where interlocutors are equal in their social status. This result is congruent with Farina and Sheibani’s (2019) result because Iranian EFL learners and English native speakers use more preferred responses than dispreferred ones in situations where the speakers have equal social status.

It is worth noting that the learners mostly use ‘toward non-compliance’ and ‘non-compliance’ strategies in situation three, which highlights the highest amount of counterthreats. This is attributed to the senior who opts for a face-threatening act because s/he is not more cooperative with a little kid. Besides, the learners have illustrated that they are elders and should be respected rather than threatened by a little niece. With regard to situation six, the learners mainly use the ‘toward compliance’ strategy and opt for a face-saving act because the younger
brother is right. His camera is taken without his permission and it should be replaced if there is something wrong with it. Yet, the ‘toward non-compliance’ strategy is also preferred by the learners because the threat seems offensive from a younger brother. While the learners highly use dispreferred responses in situation three, they tend to use more preferred responses in situation six. This result is consistent with Limberg’s (2009) result in the two situations mentioned above. The results also reveal that the learners tend to use the ‘toward non-compliance’ strategy across situations three and six. It constitutes an extent where Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners show the most salience when they receive a threat from a junior who is supposed to respect their demands. Overall, the learners opt for a face-threatening act and their dispreferred responses surpass the preferred ones in situations where the threateners have a lower social status. This result agrees with Farina and Sheibani’s (2019) and Limberg’s (2009) results when the amount of the dispreferred responses surpasses the amount of the preferred ones by English native speakers in situations of lower social status.

Based on what is remarked, the overall results across all situations unveil that Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners rely primarily on the ‘compliance’ and ‘toward non-compliance’ strategies. This is due to their preference for either a face-saving act to comply with the threatener’s threat and avoid any conflict or a face-threatening act to reject the threat indirectly. Besides, the ‘toward compliance’ strategy is also favored by the learners while the ‘non-compliance’ and ‘open-ended’ strategies are sparingly used. The latter is the least frequently used strategy in each situation and across all situations by these learners when they respond to threatening situations. This result is in line with Farina and Sheibani’s (2019), Geluykens and Limberg’s (2012), and Limberg’s (2009) results which show that the ‘open-ended’ strategy is least frequently used by English native speakers and Iranian EFL learners. The total amount of the preferred responses is more frequent than the total amount of the dispreferred responses. This shows the learners’ preference for face-saving acts when receiving threats in their context. This result is congruent with Farina and Sheibani’s (2019), Geluykens and Limberg’s (2012), and Limberg’s (2009) overall results, which reveal that native speakers of English (and Iranian EFL learners) tend to use more preferred responses than dispreferred responses in the threatening situations.

Furthermore, Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners tend to complement the head acts by internal and external devices to attenuate the illocutionary force of their responses, particularly the dispreferred ones. They tend to use more than one mitigator in one utterance to modify the head act of it. They resort to ‘grounder’ and ‘apology’ devices more than other types of mitigators. They prefer to provide reasons, explanation, and justification to convince the threatener of their responses and to downgrade their face-threatening acts. By doing so, they may reduce the aggressive tone of their indirect rejection when they do not comply with the threatener’s demand. They also apologize when they do something unacceptable to avoid conflict with the threatener. This result agrees with Geluykens and Limberg’s (2012) result which unveils that English native speakers tend to use more ‘grounder’ and ‘apology’ modifiers to mitigate the face attacks of their responses to threatening situations. On the other hand, ‘politeness marker,’ ‘conditional clause,’ ‘interrogative,’ ‘appealer,’ ‘promise,’ and ‘imposition minimizer’ are used with various frequencies by the learners. All of these mitigators downgrade the illocutionary force of their responses.
However, these learners mainly resort to external devices that occur before and/or after the head acts more often than the internal devices in their responses. The external devices are easier in construction than the internal devices. The former include simple clauses whereas the latter are more difficult syntactically and pragmalinguistically. This is in line with Economidou-Kogetsidis’ (2012) and Hassall’s (2001, 2012) results which unveil that learners tend to use more external modifiers than internal modifiers in their utterances.

**Conclusion**

One aspect of impoliteness that causes challenges in exchanges is face attack and the responses given to it. Threat acts do not only threaten the hearer’s face but rather the speaker’s face can also be damaged by verbal threats when the hearer deliberately does not comply with the speaker’s threat or behaves aggressively. Responding to threats may create impoliteness if not performed appropriately. Thus, this study investigates how Iraqi-Kurdish EFL learners respond to offensive acts such as verbal threats performed intentionally in a conversation.

The findings unveil that the preferred responses surpass the dispreferred responses across all situations. Besides, ‘compliance’ is the most frequently used strategy by these learners across all situations. The second and third most commonly used strategies are ‘toward non-compliance’ and ‘toward compliance.’ They produce fewer ‘non-compliance’ responses and sparingly use an ‘open-ended’ strategy across all situations. The learners opt for a face-saving act when they comply with the threatener’s demand, yet they resort to a face-threatening act to reject the threat in an indirect way when they find it offensive and aggressive. The findings reveal differences in using the strategies with a diversity of social power in diverse situations. There is evidence that these learners display some sensitivity towards the social power of the speaker. The data reveal that the preferred responses are favored in situations where the threateners are higher and equal in their social power. Yet, the dispreferred responses are mainly used in situations where the threateners have lower social power. Furthermore, these learners use mitigators, particularly ‘grounder’ and ‘apology’, to attenuate the illocutionary force of their responses. They use more external devices than internal devices in their reactions to threatening situations.

The results of the current study are advantageous to those who are interested in the context of EFL. It highlights impoliteness with threat responses which can be beneficial for EFL teachers and curriculum designers. It informs them how EFL learners behave and use the strategies and mitigators when they receive threats in their context. This study would improve EFL learners’ pragmatic competence and raise EFL teachers’ awareness of the social power in this issue. Moreover, curriculum designers can set up proper settings where strategies can be used for responding to aggressive utterances or face attacks. This study also suggests further studies to investigate the effect of age, gender, and culture on EFL learners when they respond to threatening occasions in their context.

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### Appendices

#### Appendix A

#### Background questionnaire

Native language: ……………….
Place of birth: ………………….
Country of citizenship: ………………. 
Gender: Male ….. .     Female …….. 
Age: ……….. .
I am currently enrolled in: …………………
Have you ever been to an English-speaking country? How long? …………………. 

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### Appendix B

**Description of DCT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of scenario</th>
<th>Situation description + threat utterance (in italics)</th>
<th>Power relation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>You have to park your car in a non-parking area at the station because you’re late to pick up your parents. A policeman has watched you, comes up to you and says: “This is a non-parking area where you have just parked. If you don’t move your car, I’ll have to give you a ticket.”</td>
<td>S &gt; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ahmed, a fellow student of yours, helps you out with your English homework and even gets some former exam papers for you to practice. In return, you promised to help him with the proofreading of his research paper, which you can’t do for lack of time. When you meet him, he says to you: “You were supposed to proofread my paper. If you don’t help me with my paper, you mustn’t count on my help any longer.”</td>
<td>S = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You are taking care of your little niece Adar. Before she is allowed to watch TV in the evening, she has to finish her homework. This takes a while; therefore you only let her watch TV for a short time. Although it’s not bedtime yet, you send her to bed because she is becoming a nuisance and you want to call one of your friends for his/her birthday. She says to you: “But I always get to watch the next show. If I’m not allowed to watch TV any longer, I’ll tell my parents.”</td>
<td>S &lt; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>You want to go on a picnic with your family on Wednesday. Your professor demands you and your colleagues to take an exam on the same day you want to travel with your family. Your professor says to you, “This is the only chance for you. If you do not take the exam, your mark will be zero.”</td>
<td>S &gt; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>You are sharing a flat with one of your fellow students. It is exam time and you have a lot to study and less time to spend on other things such as cleaning the flat. Your fellow student is fed up with you not doing your chores, so s/he says to you: “The bathroom is still in a mess and it’s your turn to clean it. If you are not cleaning up when’s your duty, you must do my chores next time.”</td>
<td>S = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Your little brother Shwan has been given a brand new digital camera for his birthday, a present you have been keen on as well. One weekend you are going away with your friends to the seaside and you would like to borrow your brother’s camera. He is not at home when you leave, so you take it without permission. When you return, he says to you: “I didn’t allow you to take my new camera. If there’s something wrong with the camera, I want you to replace it.”</td>
<td>S &lt; A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Validating English Language Entrance Test at a Saudi University for Health Sciences

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Abstract
This paper aims to validate the English Language Entrance Test for King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Science (hereafter KSAU-ET). It supports the argument regarding using specially designed in-house entrance tests at health universities by showcasing the test's development, administration, and validation process. It presents a new framework for test validation that is informed by various existing frameworks such as Messick (1996), Sireci (1998) and, Weir (2005), with a specific focus on the notions of unitary and practicality. The proposed framework treats validity as a pre-, during, and post-test process that collects evidence from each phase to support the test's overall validity. The data were collected using different tools and through the three stages of the validation process. The test was taken by 474 candidates who applied to join KSAU-HS Stream II medical program. The data confirmed that the test was reliable (alpha > 7) and reasonably meet the university's needs to select the program's top prospective candidates. Nevertheless, the study highlighted the importance of collecting further evidence in future studies and including more selection criteria in the regression model of analysis. Using this framework, the study contributes to the existing body of research that investigate English entrance test validation. It shows that exam validity is a context-sensitive process strongly associated with the purpose for which the exam is used. Finally, the paper discusses pedagogical implications that may help educators at health science universities develop in-house entrance tests in place of standardized tests, which often do not address context, curriculum, or program objectives.

Keywords: English entrance test, health science, language assessment validity, practicality, validation, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no2.4
Introduction

The growing demand for higher education in general and health sciences, in particular, have increased selectivity and pushed universities to use different admission criteria that vary from the standardized test such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to interviews and in-house entrance tests. However, some universities still witness a high dropout rate during the first academic year or students' failure to meet their degree studies' required standards. The internationalization of education is another element that added to universities' pressure to ensure that their newly admitted students have adequate English language proficiency to complete their subject courses in English. Brown (1993), Fulcher (1997), and Wall, Clapham, and Alderson (1994) are a few examples of studies that looked at in-house placement tests in different higher education contexts to ensure a good outcome.

In Saudi Arabia, most universities require students to complete an academic year of a foundation English language program. Students are exposed to academic English reading and writing to help them succeed in their chosen academic programs. The university's selection criteria are mainly international standardized exams that are not developed with the curriculum or program's needs. The mismatch between the programs' requirements and standardized exams often results in students studying English courses that do not support their future needs (Jenkins and Leung 2019; Tomlinson 2020). This paper showcases an in-house entrance test validation process and illustrates how it served its purpose of distinguishing between student applicants based on the program’s objectives. This validation process was completed by answering the following questions:

1. To what extent is the KSAU-ET valid in terms of test items and quality?
2. How did the students who took the KSAU-ET perceive the test?
3. Did the test successfully predict the students' GPAs in the first academic semester?

By answering these questions, the researchers demonstrate that the process of test validity and the test results supported the decision not to offer English courses for the Stream II students (see the context section). The test also helped distinguish between students and predict their success versus failure rate in the first academic semester.

In this paper, the researchers tested the validity of the proposed test and its practicality. The study calls for specialized colleges to build up their entrance tests to suit their programs' objectives instead of using ready-made tests limited to testing the candidates’ general knowledge of English. Our entrance test was shown to be valid and practical, as reflected in the accepted candidates' results in the academic courses they studied during their first semester at the university.

The following sections discuss the test's goals and the steps to reach the implementation level.
Test's Goals
The test aims to:

a. successfully identify and exclude those at risk of failing their academic degree because of their weak language abilities.

b. predict the probability that accepted applicants will succeed in their studies in the medium of English once they join the university.

c. successfully identify the strength of the applicant's language abilities

Literature Review

Language Test Validity

Test validity in general and language test validity, in particular, have been defined in various ways in the literature. However, most mainstream researchers agree that a valid test should discriminate between test users and provide a meaningful difference by measuring what it is meant to measure (Ginther & Yan 2018; Jenkins and Leung 2019). Brookhart and Nitko (2019) have defined exam validity as the robustness of the interpretation and utilization of assessment results using evidence from different sources. This suggests that the concept of validity applies to how any exam results will be used and not necessarily to its procedures. The purpose of an exam also plays a significant role in its validation. Therefore, instead of asking whether a test is valid, specific questions must be asked about the test scores' uses for a specific purpose (e.g., placing students into specific classes or admitting them into a specific program). This purpose and the situation in which the exam is used determines the degree of its validity. For example, a particular exam may have a high validity score as an admission test in one university and yet score poorly in another. This scoring could be explained by the fact that the exam items match one university's program objectives while not matching the other program. Brookhart’ and Nitko's (2019) definition suggests that a conclusion about an exam's validity should not be reached before studying and combining different types of validity evidence.

The process of creating a valid and reliable placement test is a difficult one that involves hard work as the test items must be closely aligned to a curriculum with clear goals and objectives. Once the test is developed, it should be followed by piloting, analyzing, and reviewing the items to ensure that they are reliable and that effective placement decisions can be made (Westrick, 2005). Therefore, when designing an in-house test, one should consider the institute's specific needs and objectives and pilot the test to reflect its curriculum (Dinh, 2019; Inoue, 2006).

However, it is crucial to say that validating tests help provide score-based predictions and theoretical and empirical grounded explanations of these scores (Farley, Yang, Min, and Ma 2020; Xi & Sawaki, 2017). Miller et al., (2013) stress that validity is used to answer two critical questions about tests. The first is related to how appropriate, meaningful, and useful the scores’ interpretation is for the results’ intended application. The second addresses the effect of the particular uses and interpretations that are made of the results. In this validation process, the test-taking process, strategies, and the consequences of the test should be investigated.
**Validity and Practicality**

Practicality is as vital an element of any assessment as its validity and reliability. The concept of practicality has saturated the topic of validity in education. The discussion of different types of validity and then different conceptualization of unitary validity is evident in the importance of practicality to the validity. Allen and Yen (2002) distinguish between three major types of validity, i.e., content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. While content validity does not require statistical calculations, criterion-related validity and construct validity are based on statistical measures and correlation testing. The researchers will focus the discussion here specifically on content and construct validity due to its relevance to the current paper.

Content validity refers to the process of rational analysis of the content of the test. It does not require statistical calculation but mainly depends on the individual subjective judgment of the test items. This type of validity is divided into two types, i.e., face validity and logical validity. While face validity discusses the extent to which the test can measure the relevant trait, logical validity is an advanced form of face validity. It measures carefully and logically the extent to which the domain of behaviors is being defined and how the written exam items reflect logically and precisely that domain. Although content validity is often subjective, it is a cornerstone in developing all tests, and test items should be written to meet content validity requirements (Allen & Yen, 2002).

Construct validity focuses on the extent to which a test measures the theoretical construct that it was designed to measure. Unlike content validity, construct validity is an ongoing verification of predictions made about the test scores. These predictions are about how test scores should behave in different situations and are based on current theory regarding the construct or trait being measured. These predictions could be related to group differences, changes in time, age, gender or location, correlation, or how the exam is processed. Construct validity is enhanced if data support the predictions. When there is no data to support the predictions, it could mean that the experiment is flawed or that the theory was not correct, and it should be revised. It could also mean that the test does not measure the trait or the construct it was supposed to measure.

It is critical to mention here that the idea that all tests must rigidly conform to a specific type of validity allows little flexibility, especially when viewed from the practicality framework. Space should be created to negotiate the extent to which the purpose and use of validity could influence the type of evidence needed to validate a test. This brings us to the unitary notion of validity, which stresses that validity should be dealt with as one unit rather than dividing it into different types (Brookhart & Nitko, 2019; Ginther & Yan, 2018; Messick, 1996). Within the unitary notion of validity, different validity types became pieces of evidence to provide interpretations for test scores and support the use of a particular test. The argument here is to bring further evidence that, in nature, represent "the different types of validity" in one place without creating binaries between them. Bachman and Palmer's (1996) work introduced the notion of test usefulness to make Messick's (1996) framework of unitary more accessible to practitioners. Their notion of test usefulness is based on five qualities, i.e., construct validity, reliability, authenticity, inter-activeness, impact, and, most importantly, practicality. Through these different works, the notion of validity in language tests started to focus on score
interpretation for particular test use rather than the test itself, and validation research became more empirically driven (Farlay et al. 2020; Xi & Sawak, 2017).

Weir (2005) proposed a socio-cognitive framework that consists of five types of validity evidence: context validity, theory-based validity, scoring validity, consequential validity, and criterion-related validity. However, according to Weir (2005), those types of validity complement each other and not alternatives. The first two types of validity are linked to the test takers' characteristics and state that the tested abilities depend on the test-takers internal mental process. The scoring validity in this framework is placed in the center as it is seen to determine the exam's reliability. This scoring validity includes item analysis, internal consistency, error of measurement and, marker reliability.

The notion of test usefulness paved the way for further development in the validity framework in language testing with the introduction of an argument-based approach to validity by Kane, Crooks and, Cohen (1999) and later represented in the work of Chapelle, Enright and Jamieson (2008), Bachman and, Palmer (2010), and Addey, Maddox, and Zumbo, 2020. The argument-based approach is the most relevant one to this study as it presents "a simple, systematic process for how validation researchers structure validity arguments, linking validity evidence for the development and use of a test" (Im, GH., Shin, D., and Cheng, L, 2019, p. 26). It provides researchers with great flexibility to determine the argument they want to make based on the test's context and purpose. It also gives room for negotiating the types of evidence collected to support any claim regarding the test validity (Addey et al. 2020; Kane, 2013). To sum up, the argument-based approach is grounded on claims backed by data that must be supported by a warrant supported by evidence.

Unlike other proposed frameworks such as Weir (2005), that view the validity items as components that give a sense of binaries, the researchers believe that validity is collecting evidence. It should be implemented throughout the test's different phases, i.e., pre-, during- and post-test. However, the researchers argue that those pieces of evidence should be treated as one unit to substantiate an exam's validity. For us, the validation process's ultimate goal is developing and evaluating evidence for a proposed score interpretation and use based on the context (Farlay et al. 2020; Im et al., 2019; Xi & Sawak, 2017). This paper adds to the body of work supporting the argument-based validity by reflecting on the process through which the entrance test for health sciences has undertaken. It focuses on the dialogue between practicality and validity as the main drive for having a fair and robust entrance test and shows the evidence collected to support the validity argument.

Our framework consists of multiple phases that were informed by Messick (1996), Brookhart and Nitko (2019), Sireci and Faulkner-Bond (2014), Sireci (1998) and Weir, (2005). The framework aims at collecting as much evidence as possible throughout the process of test development, administration, and scoring. It also considers test-takers judgment of the test items using what is typically referred to as face validity (Allen and Yen, 2002). Figure one displays the researchers' understanding of an effective validation framework.
Methods

As explained in the previous section, the framework governed the research design and implementation from the beginning until the end. This included the instruments development and data collection steps and ended with the data analysis and validation process.

The Context

King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (hereafter KSAU-HS) is the only Saudi University specializing solely in the health science field. English is the official medium of instruction in KSAU-HS. All students accepted into the university must first, complete three semesters of intensive English language and Basic Science courses in the College of Science and Health Professions (hereafter COSHP). Through COSHP, the university has two entrance points to the College of Medicine (hereafter COM). The first referred to as Stream I, consists of high school graduates admitted based on three main criteria: cumulative percentage of secondary school (natural sciences and no less than 90%), an achievement test, and an aptitude test. Each of these holds a weight of 30% - 40% - 30%, respectively. These Stream I students must complete three semesters in COSHP. At the end of the first academic year, i.e., the preparatory year (two semesters), the students are allocated to different Colleges (i.e., Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Applied Medical Sciences and, Health Informatics) based on their college choice and cumulative GPA.

The number of seats distributed for student allocation varies annually based on capacity and other mitigating factors. For COM, the number of seats (i.e., spaces) ranges from 75 to 100 for Jeddah and Riyadh female students, respectively, and from 125 to 175 for Jeddah and Riyadh male students, respectively.

The second entry point into COM is through an accelerated program, only offered in the region by KSAU-HS, referred to as Stream II admission. The criteria for entry are; first, a recent bachelor's degree in Basic Science, Applied Medical Science, or Pharmacy. Second, the
cumulative degree GPA must not be lower than "Very Good" (i.e., 3.75/5.00). The candidates must then pass a basic medical science entrance test and personal interview. As the program is highly competitive, a maximum of 25 applicants can be accepted if they successfully qualify.

Previously, Stream II students were required to complete a one-semester intensive English language program to ensure their English language skills were at the same level as their Stream I counterparts in semester three (second-year students). However, it soon became apparent that most students accepted in Stream II were already proficient in English and did not require additional language courses. A change of policy then came into effect in which the intensive language program was replaced with additional science courses. To ensure that new applicants' English language competency for the Stream II program was maintained, an entrance test to assess their English language skills was added to the admissions criteria.

Given that English language skills required to succeed in the Stream II program relate to English as the official medium of instruction (hereafter, EMI) in the health sciences, most standardized English tests would not match the requirements. Therefore, the university introduced the King Saud bin Abdulaziz University Entrance Test (KSAU-ET) to ensure that candidates to the program were qualified to study in English at the level required and keep pace with stream I students.

Participants
This study included four executive committee members from the English language department (two females and two males) and eight Subject Matter Experts (hereafter, SMEs). Four teacher assistants were included for piloting, and oral feedback and, 474 students took part as test-takers.

A separate committee made up of members of the University's Deanship of Admissions and Registration (hereafter DAR), COM, and COSHP reviewed the students' applications and documents. Based on the number of applications, the entry criteria, including GPA, were established, and this committee set a cut-off point. This resulted in approximately 500 students qualifying to take part in the entrance tests. However, on the day of the English test, only 474 applicants attended. The number consisted of 159 male and 315 female participants distributed across two campuses, Riyadh and Jeddah (Deanship of Admissions and Registration, 2019).

Data Collection
The test's validation process necessitated data collection from different sources using different tools based on the requirement of each phase, as illustrated by the framework (see figure one). This process includes the candidates' scores in KSAU-ET, the questionnaires regarding face validity and, their performance (i.e., GPA) in the first semester after joining the university.

Test Instrumentation and Validation
For the development of the test, an executive committee that consisted of faculty members from the English Language departments was formed. The members developed an English Language entrance test to ensure candidates met the criteria for acceptance. To determine the test's scope, the committee prepared a list of the content areas and cognitive abilities that the test is designed to measure in alignment with the curriculum objectives. The test
Validating English Language Entrance Test at a Saudi Arabian University

Jawhar, Al Makoshi, Alhawsawi, & Alkushi


The entrance test consists of listening, vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension sections (see appendix A). It has a total of 100 multiple-choice questions (hereafter MCQs) that were pitched at an intermediate to upper-intermediate level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Items were dichotomously scored, with equal weightings for correct answers, and wrong answers were not penalized. The time allocated for the test was three hours, and was administered in a paper-based format. The test was designed to gauge the candidates' English language level and determine whether the successful candidates' scores could be an accurate indicator of their academic success level in their first academic term.

To validate the test's content, the research team used multiple validation tools that were implemented before, during and, after the test was administered. Before the test, the team used a validation framework that entails the four elements of content validity described by Sireci (1998). According to Sireci (1998), content validity covers domain definition, domain representation, domain relevance, and the appropriateness of test construction procedures. As mentioned earlier, the following was done to address these domains.

a. SMEs were invited to evaluate the domain definition involved in the entrance test and assess the test specifications.

b. The SMEs were also asked to evaluate the domain representation and rate all the test items to assess the extent to which the test items are consistent with the curriculum framework (Crocker, Miller, and Franks, 1989; Sireci, 1998)

c. The SMEs were also invited to assess the domain relevance of the test items. They were requested to rate the degree to which the test items were relevant to the test specifications that were initially matched with the course specifications. In other words, they were required to ensure that the test measures all essential aspects of the content domain and that the test did not include irrelevant items (see table one). Following the SMEs rating task, the team used a statistical summary table to show how well each item measures the corresponding objective.

d. The SMEs reviewed the technical accuracy and quality of the test's items (Haladyna and Downing, 1989) as part of the test construction procedures' appropriateness.

e. The SMEs also scrutinized the test for any offensive or inappropriate language that might impact the construct or indirectly disadvantage any test-takers (Ramsey, 1993).

f. Finally, the test was piloted and followed by statistical item analyses to select the most appropriate and delete any inappropriate or problematic items.

Table 1. Rating task assessing item/objective congruence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item#</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>1 (Not at all)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (Very well)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The second phase of the validation process was carried out during the test. It covered the physical conditions under which the test was taken, the uniformity of administration and, test security (Jin 2019; Weir 2005). Evidence related to this phase of the test validity was collected through observations. The aim was to understand whether the test administration's physical conditions were satisfactory and adhere to the general standardized rules and specifications. That included investigating and unifying the test set's actual setting across rooms and campuses, e.g., the lighting, ventilation, tables and chairs, background noise, and quietness of the test halls. The uniformity of test administration was established by ensuring that the test was administered in the same manner across sites, e.g., preparation, timing and, support available during-test. The test-takers security was also addressed by limiting access to the test to only authorized people and not allowing test-takers to make copies of the test or share information during the test session.

The third phase was carried out after the test. In this phase, different tools were utilized to analyze the data and validate the scoring process, including descriptive statistics, reliability (internal consistency reliability), and item analysis (item difficulty and discrimination). Because validity is not a one facet process, as discussed earlier, the candidates' perception regarding the test's suitability was also analyzed through a questionnaire that targeted what is usually referred to as face validity. This phase shows the test's internal property and adds to the evidence collected for the previous two stages' validity, and offers evidence supporting "the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment" (Messick, 1989, p. 13).

**Research Procedures**

The data collected through the validation process of this research was analyzed statically and qualitatively. However, the data from observations and initial meetings were analyzed to understand the general feedback related to the test validity. This understanding has led to the development of the final version of the test. Nevertheless, the data collected from the entrance test were statically analyzed, as seen in the results and discussion section. For the analysis of the inter-test properties (construct validity), the researchers used descriptive statistics, reliability, item difficulty, and item discrimination. The analysis was done using SPSS Version 21.0. For the intra-test properties (face validity), with a 5-point Likert scale, a percentage table is used to reflect the degree of the participants' responses.

**Results**

This section discusses the results of the test validation process based on our proposed framework. During phase one of the test validation process and following the analysis of the SMEs responses to the rating task to assess the congruence between the test items and the course objective, the committee concluded that the test meets the following criteria:

1. The test items correspond to the curriculum objectives.
2. The test specifications cover the domain definition.
3. The test specifications represent and are relevant to the domain.
4. The test construction procedures are appropriate.
5. The statistical analysis of the piloting group showed that the test is reliable, with alpha >0.7. It also showed that the levels of item difficulty were appropriate and that the face validity was sustained. However, the committee was cautious that the teacher assistants'
educational background might have impacted their results as the piloting statistics did not distinguish them.

As reported by the test invigilators and the committee members, the during-test phase observation data revealed that the test adhered to the general rules and specifications as the test's actual setting across venues in each campus. The venues were unified in terms of the lighting, ventilation, tables and chairs, background noise and, quietness of the test halls. The university follows the same standards for building qualities and specifications of equipment and design of lecture halls. The observation reports showed that the test was administered in the same manner regarding preparation, timing and, support available during the test. The test security was monitored by arranging four to eight invigilators based on the students' number and size of the test venue to prevent the test-takers from sharing information. Access to the test was also limited to authorized people only, which ensured validity regarding security.

By securing the validity of the previous two phases, the researchers could then move to the post-test stage of the validation process (Figure one). This phase focused on the inter-and intra-test validation process.

Discussion of the results
In this section, the researchers present a detailed discussion of the validation process based on different phases of the proposed framework (see Figure one).

Inter-test Validity
General Descriptive Statistics
This section addresses the validity of inter-test property, providing evidence for reliability and item analysis, item difficulty, and item discrimination and, face validity from the test-takers perspective.

Test Reliability
The total number of questions used in the listening comprehension section was 20 MCQs. The mean score of the 474 candidates in the listening comprehension was 10.63, and the standard deviation was 3.16. The second section of the test was grammar, and it consisted of 30 MCQs. The mean of candidates' scores in this section was 14.79, while the standard deviation was 5.17. The vocabulary section was made up of 25 MCQs, and the candidates' mean score was 10.06, and the standard deviation was 4.83. The last section, reading comprehension, was made up of 20 MCQs. In this section, the mean score was 9.73, and the standard deviation was 3.85. As illustrated in the table below (Table two), the candidates' mean scores were highest in grammar (14.79) and the lowest in reading comprehension (9.73). On the other hand, while again highest in grammar (5.17), the standard deviation was the lowest in listening comprehension (3.16).

A brief look at the table below (Table two) indicates that the candidates found the grammar section much more accessible than listening comprehension, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, respectively. The Cronbach reliability coefficient was calculated to determine each part of the test's internal reliability or internal consistency. The Cronbach alpha is used to look at how the test items measure the same concept and, hence, is connected to the test's inter-relatedness. On this test, a value higher than 0.7 indicates that the test is reliable.
The test's overall internal consistency, including the four parts, is (>0.7), suggesting a reasonable and acceptable level of reliability. However, when the researchers view each component of the test separately, as can be seen from Table one, the listening comprehension section of the test was the least consistent (Cronbach's α value= 0.594), compared to vocabulary (0.813), grammar (0.719) and reading comprehension (0.719).

### Table 2. Test reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Component</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Cronbach's α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening Comprehension</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>10.65</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>14.79</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>10.06</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>9.73</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.719</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though the reasons for this low score are beyond the scope of this study, and though there is limited research on this topic, some listening comprehension challenges have been documented for Saudi students. Hamouda (2013), for instance, reported that Saudi students are often negatively impacted by spoken accent, pronunciation, audio speed, lack of concentration, anxiety, and lack of vocabulary. In our test, authentic data was used that resembled what students might hear in any classroom setting. The recordings varied in context, speed, and accent. The recordings' quality was judged as very good to excellent by three independent listening comprehension instructors who were consulted as subject matter experts.

After a post-test review of the listening section, the committee decided to keep the section rather than delete it. The rationale for this decision was that candidates would be taught in lecture halls identical to where the test was administered. Thus, the circumstances under which they obtained their scores were more realistic and demonstrated how they would cope in similar classrooms settings. Additionally, the fact that there was no significant difference between the whole group when it came to this part of the test also influenced the decision to keep it. Nevertheless, the listening part questions were subjected to further investigation under the individual test items analysis to assess their difficulty level and were found to be appropriate (see the next section). Aside from the listening section, the researchers can assert that the test has a satisfactory level of internal consistency, i.e., across-items, and can be considered reliable and consequently valid from this perspective (Farlay et al., 2020; Messick, 1996; Xi and Sawak, 2017). By statistically establishing the test's reliability, the researchers moved to a more detailed and in-depth validation, i.e., item analysis, as explained in the framework (Figure one).

### Item Analysis (Percent Correct)

For this part of the validation process, the researchers used item analysis under which both item difficulty and item discrimination were calculated. It is essential to mention here that
each question's difficulty is defined as the percentage (calculated across all candidates) of correct answers. The easier the question, the higher the number of candidates who have answered it correctly, and, hence, the higher the difficulty value. If the question was challenging and a lower number of candidates answered it correctly, the difficulty value would be low.

Table 3. *Item difficulty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q21</th>
<th>0.45</th>
<th>Q41</th>
<th>0.36</th>
<th>Q61</th>
<th>0.26</th>
<th>Q81</th>
<th>0.47</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Q42</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>Q62</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>Q82</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>Q43</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>Q63</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>Q83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>Q44</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>Q64</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>Q84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>Q45</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>Q65</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>Q85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>Q46</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>Q66</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>Q86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Q27</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>Q47</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>Q67</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>Q87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>Q28</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Q48</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>Q68</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Q88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>Q49</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Q69</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>Q89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>Q50</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>Q70</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Q90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>Q51</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>Q71</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>Q91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Q52</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>Q72</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>Q92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>Q53</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>Q73</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>Q93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>Q54</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>Q74</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>Q94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>Q35</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>Q55</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>Q75</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>Q95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>Q56</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>Q76</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>Q96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Q37</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Q57</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>Q77</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>Q97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>Q58</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>Q78</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Q98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>Q39</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>Q59</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>Q79</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>Q99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Q40</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>Q60</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>Q80</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>Q100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three lists the difficulty of each question. Any test item with a correct answer rate lower than 0.25 or higher than 0.75 was reviewed carefully.

Table three shows that questions 9, 12, 13, and 44 received a score of less than 0.25 (p<0.25), indicating that these were the most straightforward questions in the test. These questions were included to help reduce anxiety at the start of the test. The difficulty of the items then increases as the test progresses to peak at item number 65.

Table four summarizes the items that scored less than 0.25 or more than 0.75. Questions 56, 57, 58, 65, 66, and 68 are the most difficult questions with a difficulty level of more than 0.75 (p>0.75). These items were reviewed, and the committee agreed to include them to allow differentiation between the candidates. Questions with a p-value of less than 0.25 (p<0.25) were also reviewed for suitability.
Table 4. Summary of item difficulty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>The number of items</th>
<th>Item number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p.&lt;0.75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9, 12, 13, 44, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25&gt;p&lt;0.75</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1-8, 10-11, 14-44, 59-64, 96-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p&gt;0.25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>56, 57, 58, 65, 66, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of items</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table five shows that all the test items received positive discrimination index values (PBI), which means that they have discriminated among the applicants. While no item received a zero value, the items varied in their ability to distinguish between the upper and the lower scorers, as shown in Table five. Table six displays the number of highly discriminated items among the participants compared to those that did fairly with a focus on the skills.

Table 6. Summary of items discriminations index based on tested skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Component</th>
<th>Total number of items</th>
<th>Items with DI (Negative)</th>
<th>Items with DI (Equal zero)</th>
<th>Items with DI (0.10 -0.30)</th>
<th>Items with DI (&gt; 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When interpreting the value of discrimination, the committee compared the value to each item's difficulty index (p-value), particularly those which were intentionally written to be easy or more challenging. For instance, if an item had a discrimination index of < 0.2 but a p-value of >7, the committee considered it relatively easy for most applicants. The last step under the item analysis was an analysis of the distractors. The committee tested the distractors for each item to verify that they were not miskeyed or implausible. This was done by calculating the proportion of the participants' selected answers to the response options. The quality of the items’ distractors was found to be satisfactory.

**Face Validity**

Table seven through Table 12 reveal the candidates' responses from the face validity questionnaire. For instance, Table seven shows how the candidates perceived their proficiency level in the four tested language skills. As illustrated in table seven, the candidates rated their reading skills as the highest, followed by listening, speaking, and grammar. Table seven also highlights the mismatch between the candidates' perceived level of proficiency in listening and their actual performance in this skill, as listening was ranked the lowest in terms of obtained scores. On the other hand, grammar was perceived as the lowest in the candidates’ perception of their proficiency level.

Table 7. Self-rated English language proficiency (Q1-4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of proficiency</th>
<th>Speaking (%)</th>
<th>Reading (%)</th>
<th>Listening (%)</th>
<th>Grammar (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (not good)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>40.48</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (very good)</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>40.48</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>9.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When it came to the test's overall difficulty level (Table eight), most candidates classified the test as moderate (73.81%), whereas only 2.38% found it very easy. On the other side of the continuum, 4.76% found the test very difficult.

The candidates were also asked to rate the difficulty level of the test components of the reading passages and the vocabulary. The results show that 38.1% found the reading passages at a moderate level of difficulty, while 11.9% found the reading passages and the vocabulary very difficult. A relatively smaller group rated the reading passages and vocabulary, 7.14% and 2.38 respectively, as easy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of difficulty</th>
<th>Overall difficulty level (%)</th>
<th>Vocabulary (%)</th>
<th>Reading passages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium level of difficulty</td>
<td>73.81</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>30.95</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The candidates varied in their responses to the appropriateness of the topics used in the test (Table nine). For instance, 26.19 percent judged the topics as adequate. Nineteen percent (19.05) considered the test topics too general, and 11.9% said the topics were not sufficiently focused.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topics were too technical</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics lacked focus</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics were too unbalanced</td>
<td>23.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics were too general</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics were adequate</td>
<td>26.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than 60% of candidates responded that the test instructions were either clear or very clear (Table 10). However, a combined total of about 15% of the candidates perceived the test as either very unclear or somewhat unclear. That some candidates found the test instructions unclear is a concern that requires further investigation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarity level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unclear</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat unclear</td>
<td>9.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 indicates that the candidate's perception of the entrance test's accuracy to assess their English language proficiency. Most of the candidates perceived the test as accurate (42.86%) or somewhat accurate (30.95%). However, around eight percent of the candidates perceived the test as not accurate or partially inaccurate. Though low, this percentage indicates a need to investigate the reasons behind such perceptions in future research.

Table 11. Accuracy of the test as perceived by candidates (Q10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accuracy level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not accurate at all</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat inaccurate</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat accurate</td>
<td>30.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very accurate</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 shows the candidates' responses to the question regarding the appropriateness of the method of testing. Most candidates (>40%) perceived the test as appropriate (35.71%) or very appropriate (9.52%). However, about 19% of the candidates reported that it was either somewhat inappropriate (16.67%) or very inappropriate (2.38%).

Table 12. Appropriateness of the test method as perceived by the candidates (Q11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriateness level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very inappropriate</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat inappropriate</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat appropriate</td>
<td>23.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very appropriate</td>
<td>9.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the candidates' negative evaluation regarding the appropriateness of the test's method was not pursued at the time, it is another point worthy of further future investigation.

**Intra-test Validity**

*The KSAU-ET Predictivity of Students' GPA*

The students' first academic semester GPA was used as the prediction criterion to determine the predictivity validity of KSAU-ET. The predictor was the students' score in KSAU-ET. According to Zwick (2002), test productivity power can only be determined by its ability to
predict an immediate criterion such as GPA. Following this, efficient regression analysis and the P-value was calculated. The coefficients describe the mathematical relationship between the independent variable (KSAU-ET) and the dependent variable (GPA). To look at the relationship between KSAU-ET and GPA, the researchers used the following estimated linear regression equation [1]:

\[ GPA = 2.09 + 0.03 \text{EPT} \]

\[ R^2 \text{ is } 10.7\% \]

The number 2.09 is the constant of the simple regression equation, which is interpreted as the value of GPA when the KSAU-ET score is zero. The number 0.03, on the other hand, is the coefficient of KSAU-ET interpreted as the rate of increase in GPA by one unit (score) increase in KSAU-ET. The coefficient of determination, R2, is 10.7%. This means that 10.7% of the GPA variation among students could be explained by variation in students' KSAU-ET scores. Other factors explain the remaining 89.7%.

![Figure 2. Correlation between students EPT and GPA](image)

It is essential to mention here that the students performed well during the first semester of the academic year at KSAU-HS. The average GPA was 4.2 out of five points. The insignificant predictivity validity result can be attributed to the small number of the students who were accepted and enrolled in the program (50 students in total) in contrast to the number of candidates who took KSAU-ET (474 candidates). This result shows the sample's impact on the coefficients (Ali, 1987; Guan, Alam and Rao, 2019). The result, however, brings to the surface the importance of repeating the predictivity validation process with more significant data and...
including other factors such as the candidates' undergraduate specialty, socio-demographic factors, gender and, scores in the different subject matters during the first academic year at the University (Gardner, Liu, and Roberts-Thomson, 2020; Park, 2019; Puddey and Mercer, 2014).

**Conclusion**

The researchers set out to identify which candidates could successfully complete the intensive Stream II program, a unique bachelor’s degree in medicine, from a large applicant pool. This was completed with the development of the KSAU English language entrance test which was used to distinguish candidates and predict their success vs failure in the first academic semester of the program. It is a highly competitive program with limited seats, so the entry criteria, including the English language test (KSAU-ET), are crucial for selecting the best-ranked candidates. The successful candidates are required to complete an intense academic program taught and assessed solely in the medium of English.

As the university specializes in the health sciences field, the researchers needed to develop a curriculum specific entrance test to effectively assess potential students using a highly reliable and valid method. This process may not have been as successful with a commercially available test developed to test general language skills and was not aligned to the program and the curriculum objectives.

Because there is no perfect validation framework, the researchers developed a framework informed by various established frameworks. However, the main driving force behind our framework was the notions of unitary and practicality. The researchers required a framework that suited the context and met the program's needs and objectives. The proposed framework treated validation as a process of pre-, during and, post-test. The process collected evidence for each phase and added it into the test's validity without rendering a particular stage more critical than the others.

Extensive analysis of the KSAU-ET has shown it reliable, based on the data collected from the 474 candidates who completed the test and the face-validity questionnaire. The data confirm that the English entrance test was able to meet the university's needs fairly and reliably. It helped select the top prospective candidates for the Stream II medical program, as demonstrated by the GPAs of those accepted into the program at the end of the first academic semester. Nevertheless, simple regression analysis showed no significant relationship between the KSAU-ET and the students’ GPAs, highlighting the importance of collecting further evidence in future studies and including more selection criteria in the regression model of analysis. The research highlighted the importance of in-house English entrance tests for health science universities when a test validation process is carried out systematically through evidence collection in alignment with a program’s objectives.

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References


### Appendices

#### Appendix A

**King Saud bin Abdulaziz University Entrance Test (KSAU-ET) - MCQ (Multiple Choice Questions) Test Blueprint Summary**

**The Purpose of the Test**

1. To assess the English language proficiency of graduate students applying to enroll in Stream II.

2. To determine the students' skill level in reading, writing, and grammar and ensure that they are linguistically competent to pursue degree-level studies in the medium of English.

3. The English language level required should be at the very least at the exit level of our current semester three (Stream I) students. This means that students should be at the top end of the B2 / low C1 CEFR scale overall (or above).

**Test Date: XXX**

**Test Time: 3 hours**

**KSAU-ET Assessment Blueprint:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>No. of questions</th>
<th>Type of questions - MCQ</th>
<th>Targeted Skill</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>CEFR Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening Skills</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Audio recordings</td>
<td>- Ability to understand straightforward information about general topics</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>B1-C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Points</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Weightage</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Skills</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Fill in the blank: sentences and passages (cloze); and error correction</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>B1-C1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ability to recognize and identify appropriate intermediate and advanced grammatical structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Skills</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Fill in the blank, definition and word building</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>B1-C1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ability to deduce word meaning from context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ability to infer the definition of discipline-specific terms based on context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The ability to identify the right affix based on the meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Main ideas, supporting ideas, inference, organization and logic, reference and lexical comprehension</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>B2-C1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ability to identify and determine main ideas and supporting details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ability to utilize direct and implied meaning from reading passages to comprehend the meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ability to skim and scan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100% total

Appendix B

Samples from each test section

Cover page with instructions
Appendix C
Instructions and illustrative examples

Part I. Listening Comprehension
Instructions: This section has four listening prompts. Each prompt will be played twice, and you will have 2 minutes before and after each prompt to answer the questions. Listen carefully to the audios and choose the best possible answer.

Part II. Grammar Skills
A. Instructions: Select one (1) correct answer for each question below.
B. Instructions: Complete each blank in the passage below. Select the one (1) correct form of the verb from the choices given.
   Three short paragraphs with 3-4 blank spaces each. MCQ options.
C. Instructions: Each sentence has four underlined words or phrases marked A, B, C and D. Choose the letter of the one (1) underlined word or phrase that is NOT CORRECT.

Part III. Vocabulary Skills
A. Instructions: Fill in the blanks with the most suitable word from the list. There are three extra words.
B. Instructions: Choose the correct word from the list that suits the following conditions/explanations. There are two extra words.
C. Instructions: Choose the correct prefix/suffix to complete the underlined word. Disregard any changes in spelling.

Part IV. Reading Comprehension
Instructions: Read the passages below and answer the questions that follow.
   One long and one medium reading passage. MCQ questions on main ideas, supporting ideas, inference, organization and logic, reference, and lexical comprehension.
Development of Speaking Skills Assessment Criteria for Engineering Students

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Abstract
The purpose of the article is to put forward English monologue production assessment criteria to verify the efficiency of the devised methodology of teaching English for future mechanical engineers. In the course of the research, theoretical, empirical, and statistical methods have been used. Various approaches to identifying the assessment criteria have been thoroughly analyzed. Seven criteria to assess the monologue production skills, five primary and two secondary ones, have been suggested. The allocation of the points by every criterion according to the devised scales have been elucidated. The proposed assessment criteria were used in the methodological experiment that was held at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv National Technical University. The experiment in question aimed to verify the efficiency of the devised methodology of teaching English monologue production to students majoring in mechanical engineering. Three experimental groups, 34 students in total, studying in their final year of Bachelor studies within the Subject Areas of Applied Mechanics and Industrial Engineering, participated in the methodological experiment. The conducted experiment confirmed the efficiency of the methodology proposed.

Keywords: assessment criteria, engineering students, methodological experiment, National Technical University of Ukraine, speaking skills

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no2.5
Introduction

Mastering a foreign language has become an intrinsic part of a modern engineer’s training. First and foremost, it is connected with Ukraine participating in the Common European Zone to ensure the highest possible quality of the tertiary education, facilitate the collaboration between European Universities, increase the competitiveness on the labor market.

Furthermore, the importance of mastering a foreign language is facilitated by the international collaboration between higher educational institutions. This envisages participation in various student exchange programs, on-the-job training programs, collaborative publishing activities; conducting joint scientific research; organizing international conferences, conventions, workshops; launching diverse collaborative educational and scientific programs with foreign educational institutions (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014).

It is essential to note that Ukraine aims to improve the global relationships by broadening the international connections in the spheres of economy, science, and technology; ensuring industrial and commercial collaboration with foreign partners; participation in scientific and technical exhibitions, conferences, economic summits. The above stated demonstrates an increasing demand for technical specialists that can speak a foreign language fluently, thus, realizing the communicative intentions effectively in the professional sphere.

However, the foreign language constituent in the curriculum of the overwhelming majority of technical universities in Ukraine amounts to two academic hours per week, which is insufficient to attain the required level of language competence. Hence, the development of new methodologies of teaching a foreign language, namely English, to future engineers that can facilitate the teaching process through the information and communication technology, i.e., podcasting, implementation is of the utmost importance.

Verifying the efficiency of new methodologies of teaching, it is crucial to highlight the criteria of assessing the students’ competence formation. The above stated determines the topicality of the study. The purpose of the given article is to put forward English monologue production assessment criteria for engineering students and focus on the specificity of the points allocation by every criterion to verify the efficiency of the methodology devised.

Literature Review

The issue of the methodologies development that envisages the use of podcasting has been considered by such authors as Gura (2006), Stanley (2006), Dudeney and Hockly (2007), Edirsingha, Salmon and Nie (2008), Kavaliauskiené and Anusienė (2009), Travis and Joseph (2009), Waragai, Ohta and Raindl (2010), Protazanova (2013), Sysoiev (2014), Qaddour (2017) and others. A podcast, i.e., audio or a video file created and uploaded to the World Wide Web by any Internet user, was chosen as a tool to facilitate the speaking skills development. Despite the existing number of scientific works, the methodology of teaching English monologue production to future mechanical engineers that envisages the use of podcasting has not been devised yet. Having developed the methodology, it is essential to verify its efficiency by conducting a methodological experiment based on the established criteria for the monologue speech assessment.

Therefore, to ensure greater objectivity, there appears a necessity to establish a set of criteria to assess monologue speech produced by students. There is no standard classification of the criteria to assess the monologue production skills available at present. Every scientist suggests their assessment scale, dependent upon the specificity of the methodology devised. According to Halskova and Hez (2006):

While assessing the monologue production skills, it is vital to take into account the following: the diversity of the vocabulary range and the grammatical structures used, the accuracy of their usage; extension, and consistency; relevance of the language means to the communicative situation; speech duration; the realization of the speech intention; the number of sentences expressing personal attitude to the problem in question. (p.223)

Borisko (1987) distinguishes between the qualitative criteria (logical and structural systematization and coherence, situational relevance, modality, intentionality, topic correspondence, and informativity, language accuracy) and the quantitative criteria (speech duration, its rate, and fluency). Ustymenko (2013, p. 12) considers it appropriate “…to evaluate the monologue speech according to the following criteria: relevance to the topic (situation), type of monologue, the communicative intention realization, speech duration and tempo, variety of speech patterns, degree of coherence, consistency, and argumentation, structural and compositional integrity, creative aspects, phonetic, lexical, grammatical and stylistic speech accuracy.”

It is stated in the National ESP Curriculum for Universities (Bakaieva, 2005, p. 24) that “students’ speech behavior is assessed according to the following criteria: arrangement of what and how is said in terms of quantity, quality, relevance, and clarity of the information; accuracy and appropriateness of the language means used; lexical and grammatical range; logical sequence; speech duration; ability to articulate, demonstrate the required emphasis, rhythm, intonation.” To assess oral speech production, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Nikolaeva, 2003) recommends applying the following parameters: “speech tempo, coherence, communicative intention realization, accuracy, lexical range, grammatical accuracy” (p. 193). It is also indicated that “any practical control system, regardless of the approach used, requires limiting the number of possible categories to an acceptable level; the highest psychologically accepted level is restricted to seven categories, as an increase in their number inevitably leads to mental overstrain.” All in all, the question of assessing monologue production has been put forward.

**Method**

During the research, theoretical, empirical, and statistical methods were used. The theoretical methods included analysis, synthesis, and systematization of the psychological, linguistic, and methodological works. The empirical methods encompassed pedagogical observation, experimental teaching, pre-experimental and post-experimental assessments, processing the data received. The statistical methods implied the acquired data processing by methods of...
Development of Speaking Skills Assessment Criteria

Kornieva & Vashchylo

mathematical statistics with its further qualitative and quantitative analysis to prove the efficiency of the methodology devised.

**Participants**

The experiment was held at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv National Technical University. Three experimental groups (EG), that is 34 students in total, studying in their final year of Bachelor studies within the Subject Areas *Applied Mechanics* and *Industrial Engineering* at the Institute of Mechanical Engineering, participated in the methodological experiment.

**Instruments**

To ensure that the level of competence formation is approximately the same in all the experimental groups before the experiment, the Student’s t-test (to compare the average results of the two unpaired samples) and the F-test (to verify the similarity of the variance) were used.

To verify the efficiency of the devised methodology of teaching in general, the statistical criterion $\phi^*$ – Fisher z-transformation was used, whereas to verify the efficiency of the methodology in every experimental group, the Student’s t-test for the paired samples was used.

As different methodology variants were proposed in every experimental group during the methodological experiment Fisher z-transformation was used to identify the most efficient one.

**Procedures**

The conducted methodological experiment is seen as vertical and horizontal. The vertical character of the experiment implies that the level of the students’ communicative competence formation in monologue production is assessed before and after the experimental teaching. The horizontal character of the experiment entails the most effective methodology variant elicitation.

To realize the purpose of the methodological experiment the following steps are to be taken: to devise the monologue production assessment criteria; to conduct the pre-experimental and post-experimental assessments after the experiment; to process the data received in the course of the experiment, to analyze the results, to draw conclusions.

**Results**

Regarding the existing experience and current regulations and standards, considering the recommendations on limiting the number of the assessment criteria, seven criteria (five primary criteria and two secondary ones) for assessing the monologue production skills of future engineers have been put forward. The criteria, as well as the points allocation by every criterion, are stated in table one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Speaking skills assessment criteria</th>
<th>Maximum points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Communicative intention relevance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Structural completeness of the speech</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Adequacy of the professional terminology used</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Accuracy of the language means</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Coherence and cohesion</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Speech rate</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Speech duration</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The criteria specified in the table and the procedure of the points allocation by every criterion while assessing the monologue speech produced by students are to be examined thoroughly.

**Communicative intention relevance**

The speech has to correlate with the topic; the key issues are to be covered extensively; the elements of analysis, reflection, justification have to be included to realize the communicative intention in one of the professional situations. According to Sklyarenko (1995), the criterion of communicative intention relevance should have the highest value in oral speech production assessment. Due to this, 20 points are allocated by this criterion.

To calculate the points by the criterion the coefficient of the communicative intention relevance (C\_CIR) is applied. The following coefficient is calculated by the formula $C_{CIR} = \frac{A_1}{A_2}$, where $A_1$ is the number of sentences aimed at expressing the communicative intention, $A_2$ is the total number of sentences in the speech (Kirzhner, 2009). The points by the criterion are calculated using the formula: $P_{CIR} = C_{CIR} \times P_{MCIR}$, where $P_{CIR}$ – the number of points received by a student, $P_{MCIR} = 20$ – the maximum number of points by the specified criterion. An example of the point allocation procedure is given in table two.

**Table 2. Points allocation by the communicative intention relevance criterion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C_CIR</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0.9</th>
<th>0.8</th>
<th>0.7</th>
<th>0.6</th>
<th>0.5</th>
<th>0.4</th>
<th>0.3</th>
<th>0.2</th>
<th>0.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Structural completeness of the speech**

The compulsory structural elements of the monologue (introduction, main part, and conclusion) are to be presented consistently. They are to contain the problem statement, the topicality of the research, the introduction of key concepts and facts statement, the suggestions on how to solve the problem in question. It is essential to divide the text of the speech into micro texts regarding the issues highlighted. The assessment procedure by the criterion of Structural completeness of the speech is carried out by the scale presented in table three.

**Table 3. The assessment scale by the criterion of structural completeness of the speech**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 - 12</td>
<td>Requirements to the speech structure are met to the full extent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 8</td>
<td>Requirements to the speech structure are met to a sufficient degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 4</td>
<td>Requirements to the speech structure are met partially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 0</td>
<td>Requirements to the speech structure are not met.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adequacy of the professional terminology used**

This criterion aims to evaluate the students’ ability to accurately use scientific and professional terms to realize the communicative intention.

To calculate the points by the criterion it is necessary to introduce the coefficient of the professional terminology used (C\_PT), which is calculated by the formula $C_{PT} = \frac{B_1}{B_2}$, where $B_1$ is the number of sentences with the aptly used professional terms, $B_2$ is the total number of sentences in the speech (Kirzhner, 2009). The points by the criterion are calculated using the formula: $P_{PT} = C_{PT} \times P_{MPT}$, where $P_{PT}$ is the number of points received by a student, $P_{MPT} = 15$ –
the maximum number of points by the criterion. An example of the point allocation is given in table four.

Table 4. Points allocation by the adequacy of the professional terminology used criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPT</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0.9</th>
<th>0.8</th>
<th>0.7</th>
<th>0.6</th>
<th>0.5</th>
<th>0.4</th>
<th>0.3</th>
<th>0.2</th>
<th>0.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accuracy of the language means**

It means the formation of the foreign language phonetic, lexical, and grammatical competencies at an advanced level that. It encompasses, in particular, the ability to operate complex syntactic constructions efficiently, adherence to the phonetic, intonation norms of the modern English language (Protazanova, 2013).

To calculate the points by the criterion the coefficient of the accuracy of the language means ($C_{ALM}$) is to be used. The coefficient is calculated by the formula $C_{ALM} = C_1/C_2$, where $C_1$ is the number of phrases containing mistakes, $C_2$ – total number of sentences in the monologue. The points by the criterion are calculated using the formula: $P_{ALM} = C_{ALM} \times P_{MALM}$, where $P_{ALM}$ is the number of points received by a student, $P_{MALM} = 15$ – the maximum number of points by the specified criterion. An example of the point allocation is given in table five.

Table 5. Points allocation by the accuracy of the language means criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C_{ALM}</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0.9</th>
<th>0.8</th>
<th>0.7</th>
<th>0.6</th>
<th>0.5</th>
<th>0.4</th>
<th>0.3</th>
<th>0.2</th>
<th>0.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coherence and cohesion**

Assessing the monologues produced by the students in terms of coherence, it is necessary to account for the efficiency of arranging logical and structural elements in the speech, the cause-and-effect relations, absence of abrupt switches from one topic to another.

Based on the approach suggested by Borysko (1987), the students’ skills to actively and aptly use appropriate means of cohesion to sustain the logical and structural integrity of the speech are accounted for while assessing the degree of coherence. Halperin (2007) defines cohesion as a unique linking means that ensure continuity: logical sequence (temporal or spatial), interdependence of certain statements, facts, actions, and events. The cohesion of such elements in the text as sentences, supra-phrasal units, and paragraphs is measurable first and foremost (Lytneva, 1992).

It is necessary to scrutinize the specifics of the points allocation by the criterion coherence and cohesion of the speech according to the scale presented in table six.

Table 6. Points allocation by the coherence and cohesion criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coherence and cohesion</th>
<th>Coherence</th>
<th>Linking words and phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of points</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The points by the degree of coherence are calculated as follows:
10 - 9 Requirements to the degree of coherence are met to the full extent;
8 - 6 Requirements to the degree of coherence are met to a sufficient degree;
5 - 3 Requirements to the degree of coherence are met partially;
2 - 0 Requirements to the degree of coherence are not met.

To assess the speech by the availability of the linking words and phrases, the coefficient of cohesion $C_L$ is used. The coefficient is calculated by the formula: $C_L = N_1/N$, where $N_1$ is the number of the linkers used in the speech, $N$ is the total number of sentences. The coefficient of cohesion $C_L$ is expressed as points by the scale presented in table seven.

### Table 7. Points allocation by the linking words and phrases availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$C_L$</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0.9-0.8</th>
<th>0.7-0.6</th>
<th>0.5-0.4</th>
<th>0.3-0.2</th>
<th>0.1-0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Speech rate
The rate of speech helps to determine the speed of reaction, which specifies, in its turn, the degree of the speech operations automation. The speech rate is individual and is referred to by some scientists as a secondary criterion, while it does not remarkably affect the success of the communicative intention realization (Lytneva, 1992).

According to the scientific data, the speech rate of a British native speaker amounts to 3.16-5.33 syllables per second (Stepanova, 2011), the speech rate of an American native speaker, according to Laver (1994), ranges from 3.1 to 5.4 syllables per second, which is 230 syllables per minute on average. However, we believe that a student who is studying English as a foreign language in the fourth year at a technical educational institution cannot be compared to a native speaker. Therefore, assessing the speech of the students by the specified criterion, based on the approach suggested by Pashchuk (2002), the speech rate of 125-130 syllables per minute will be accepted as a norm. The points calculation by the criterion of the speech rate is carried out according to the scale presented in table eight.

### Table 8. Points allocation by the speech tempo criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllables per minute</th>
<th>130-125</th>
<th>124-120</th>
<th>119-115</th>
<th>114-110</th>
<th>109-105</th>
<th>104-100</th>
<th>99-95</th>
<th>94-90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Speech duration
Assessing monologues by the criterion in question, we rely upon the approach suggested by Skalkin (1983) and consider 4-6 complete sentences to be inherent to a fragmentary speech, 7-12 sentences – to a monologue speech unit, 13-20 sentences – to an extended monologue. The points allocation by the criterion is carried out according to the scale presented in table nine.

### Table 9. Points allocation by the speech duration criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sentences</th>
<th>13 and more</th>
<th>12-10</th>
<th>9-8</th>
<th>7-6</th>
<th>5-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Discussion

The assessment of the monologues produced by students was carried out by the assessment criteria highlighted above while conducting the methodological experiment. The experiment aimed to verify the efficiency of the devised methodology of teaching English monologue production to students majoring in mechanical engineering. The experiment was held at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv National Technical University; three experimental groups (EG), 34 students in total, studying in their final year of Bachelor studies within the Subject Areas Applied Mechanics and Industrial Engineering, participated in the methodological experiment.

The conducted methodological experiment is vertical and horizontal (the classification by Gurvych, 1980). The vertical character of the experiment implies that the level of the communicative competence formation in monologue production is assessed before and after the experimental teaching. The horizontal character of the experiment entails the most effective methodology variant elicitation.

The invariable conditions of the experimental teaching incorporate the aim and the content of the monologue production teaching, the content of the pre-and post-experimental assessment, the speech assessment criteria, the duration of the experimental teaching, the list of participants, the experimenter.

The variable conditions of the experiment encompassed different percentages of tasks on partial and detailed rendering of the information from the comprehended podcast. As the tasks on the semantic analysis serve as a basis for students’ monologue production, their allocation was equal in all three groups. Thus, in EG 1 – the percentage of tasks on partial rendering of the information from the podcast is twice as big as the percentage of tasks on the detailed rendering of the content (the correlation is 2:1). In EG 2 – the percentage of tasks on partial rendering of the information equals the percentage of tasks on the detailed rendering of the content (the correlation is 1:1). In EG 3 – the percentage of tasks on the detailed rendering of the content is twice as big as the percentage of tasks on partial rendering of the information (the correlation is 1:2).

The pre-experimental assessment results indicate an insufficient degree of the communicative competence formation in monologue production. Students’ speech did not always correlate with the topic; the problem elucidation was not extensive; the problem-statement was frequently inadequate etc. The experimental teaching, which lasted 28 hours in total (with 14 hours dedicated to extracurricular studies), was conducted through the methodology devised within the module Machine Building Technological Process Planning and its units. Students spent 45-50 minutes of every class performing the tasks by the methodology. The rest of the time they worked according to the curriculum. The aim of the post-experimental assessment was to establish the degree of future mechanical engineers’ communicative competence formation in monologue production after the experimental teaching. The average results of the pre-and post-experimental assessments are shown in table ten.
Table 10. Average results of the pre-experimental and post-experimental assessments in the experimental groups EG-1, EG-2, EG-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental group</th>
<th>Results by the monologue production assessment criteria, in points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicative intention relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG-1 Post-EA</td>
<td>15,64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG-1 Pre-EA</td>
<td>11,36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>4,28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG-2 Post-EA</td>
<td>16,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG-2 Pre-EA</td>
<td>12,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>3,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG-3 Post-EA</td>
<td>16,92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG-3 Pre-EA</td>
<td>14,08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>2,84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum points</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table, the abbreviation is used: EA-experimental assessment.

The received data has been processed by mathematical statistics methods, quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis made it possible to state that all the experimental groups reached the achievement coefficient of 0.7 and more. This is considered sufficient by Bespalko (1968). The comparison of the achievement coefficient values (pre-experimental and post-experimental assessments) showed the significant increase in all the experimental groups: an increase by 0.19 in EG-1, by 0.22 in EG-2, by 0.24 in EG-3. The maximum increase of the achievement coefficient value was stated in EG-3, which confirmed higher efficiency of the third variant of the methodology proposed. The qualitative analysis showed that an increase of the achievement coefficient value (post-experimental teaching was induced by the speech quality improvement (criteria of coherence and cohesion, structural completeness, accuracy of the language means).

Conclusion
The article is devoted to the question of putting forward the speaking skills assessment criteria to verify the efficiency of the devised methodology. A thorough analysis of the theoretical and practical studies on the speaking skills assessment has been conducted in the article; five primary criteria (communicative intention relevance, structural completeness of the speech, adequacy of the professional terminology used, accuracy of the language means, coherence and cohesion) and two secondary criteria (speech rate and its duration) to assess the speaking skills have been proposed, the peculiarities of the points allocation by these criteria have been specified. The specificity of using the highlighted assessment criteria in the methodological experiment held at...
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Igor Sikorsky Kyiv National Technical University has been regarded in the article. The prospects for further research encompass highlighting and justifying the criteria for assessing the students’ competence formation in the other skills (dialogue production, listening, reading, writing) with the corresponding points allocation scale development.

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Teaching Short Stories through the Use of the Reader-Response Theory: Second-Year Students at Dr. Moulay Tahar University-Saida

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Abstract
The Reader-Response Theory considers the learner as an active participant in extracting meaning from a literary work depending on his/her prior experience. Teaching literature critically allows the reader to create a sense, and compare the previous experience with the written text. Second-year students cannot decode and scrutinize a short academic text, which unveiled that they are unaware of the different types of readings. The research question arises in this vein is: To what extent does the Reader-Response Theory contribute to the development of the EFL students’ skills? The piece of work aims at introducing and applying the Reader-Response Theory to teaching short stories to second-year university students. The current study was conducted on students taught by the teacher-researcher at Dr. Moulay Tahar University-Saida, Algeria. A questionnaire, observation, and the analysis of students’ written assignments employed in the present work for the overarching aim of gathering data in a timely period. Yet, the results revealed that after implementing this approach, EFL students become aware of how to undertake an academic written piece. It also reinforces their thinking skills, and boosts their creativity.

Keywords: critical theory, second-year university students, short stories, teaching, the Reader Response Theory

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DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no2.6
Introduction

The teaching of literature has suffered in the past few years not because tutors lack the necessary material but due to the teachers’ perceptions of the text. They used to consider a written text as a source of meaning and joy. They also used to force their students to admire the text (Karolides, 2000). Today, English as a foreign language teachers affirm that literature requires a profound and meaningful reading so that students can negotiate, interpret, compare their experience with the text, denounce the writer, more importantly, decode meaning. The work aims at introducing the Reader-Response Theory to teaching literature to undergraduate students of English who enroll in the Department of English at Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida, Algeria. The ultimate purpose is to focus on bridging the gap between reading short stories and writing. Furthermore, the research reveals the significance of literary texts as authentic materials that reinforce teaching reading-writing skills, and develop the students’ thinking skills. Nonetheless, reading and writing are two essential skills that are thorny for EFL students owing to the severe deficiencies that they unveil at the levels of their writing pieces. Additionally, learners cannot decode meanings from an assigned text. Thus, the researcher formulates the following questions:

a- What approach could foster the learners’ reading-writing competencies?

b- What are the prime responses generated when setting a short story?

c- Can the students write a summary of the assigned text?

Review of Literature

Reading literature is a complex process in which readers have to recall, retrieve and reflect on their previous experiences or memories for the ultimate purpose of building various meanings of the text. Yang (2002) reported that reading literature often has social dilemmas and conflicts. In other words, it requires personal answers from readers. Construction of meaning occurs when the reader selects and reflects on his/her responses. Doing so entails on the students’ part to illustrate the following abilities:

- To differentiate facts from points of view.
- To comprehend meanings and understand the narrator’s tone.
- To locate details related to the explained issues.
- To discover connections between the events or actions.
- To make moral reasoning and fair judgments.
- Most importantly, to apply what they have learned from this process to other fields.

The following graph reveals that the text and the reader share a connection, but the relationship between the author and the text remains undefined and unclear.

Figure 1. Text’s Connection
Spirovska (2019, p. 22) explained the relationship between the text and the audience, “the reader-response theory views the text and reader interaction as mutually dependent. The text influences reader’s understanding and perceptions. The reader has an active role in shaping the text”. Mart (2019) reported that the reader-response theory depends on the text’s assumptions and relies on a mutual relationship between the audience and the literary work. According to Burn (2005), readers tend to “explain,” “analyze,” “synthesize,” “argue,” “interpret,” “evaluate,” “solve problems,” “infer,” “reason logically,” and “to apply.” All these capacities are effective critical thinking skills.

Rosenblatt (2005) claimed that the reader-response theory focuses on the reader’s experience, especially the emotional response and that there is not only one meaning of the text, but there are two kinds of readings:

- Reading for joy in which the reader enjoys reading a particular literary work.
- Reading because a student has to; the teacher assigned a text in the classroom.

Rosenblatt (2005) reported that the Reader-Response Theory (RRT) relies on the schemata that each student possesses. In other words, everyone constructs and interprets meaning based on prior knowledge. She refers to RRT as “transactional” because there is a relationship between the reader, and the text. Rosenblatt (2000) pointed out that in each academic piece, there is an experience because the reader and the text depend on each other. Hence, learning occurs naturally on an individual basis. However, a text does not have the same meaning for every reader; because each individual brings his/her knowledge, beliefs, and contexts to the transaction. Thereby, generating sense from text goes hand in hand with comprehension.

According to Rosenblatt (2005), there are two kinds of readings in the Reader-Response Theory:

| Efferent | Aesthetic |

*Figure 2. Efferent-Aesthetic Readings*

The purpose of reading informational texts and reading for joy is very different. These two kinds of responses that all readers have to develop.

- The Efferent component focuses on reading for information and obtaining different responses from students. Efferent comprises a memorization element and includes information on characters’ names, places, events, etc.
- The Aesthetic component focuses on linking the text with the reader on an emotional level and, most importantly, connecting the literary work with students’ lives. The aesthetic element occurs primarily with literary works and describes how the text makes the reader feel.
Teachers of literature should incorporate both response types in the classroom to balance the language teaching of form and meaning-making (Rosenblatt, 1982).

**Strategy Examples that Utilizes the RRT**

The reader-response theory has significant implications for classroom practice. It is common for teachers to create follow-up or post-reading activities that encourage unique and individual responses:

- Brainstorming or webbing: are classroom applications realized before and after reading to determine the students’ background knowledge. Thus, brainstorming activates the individual’s schemata.
- During text reading: one popular activity based on the reader-response theory is making bonds in which students use three different types of relationships as follows:

  ![Figure 3. Text’s Connection](image)

Connecting the reader, text, and transaction leads to induce meanings and achieve comprehension. The literary work has to offer linkage with the past experiences and interests, anxieties, and hopes of the reader so that the piece of literature will be vivid. In that sense, Wolfgang (2000) opined that the reader brings his/her private experiences while responding. Therefore, the learner will be autonomous, ready to participate in the classroom, and eager to know more about the literary text.

Schmidt (2002) considered several questions that literature teachers might inquire while applying the reader-response theory:

- What is…………………………………..?(Knowledge)
- What is………………………………….? (Comprehension)
- What is ……………………….connected/related? (Application)
- What are the significant components……………….? (Analysis)
- What does……………………………………….mean? (synthesis)
- What is the value………………………..…………? (evaluation)

**Helping Students Reflect on Literature**

Teaching a literary work implies assisting the student primarily to reflect on what s/he has made of the text. The learner needs to be aware of the points at which his/her experiences have led excessively to emotional or biased reactions. On the other hand, if experience and knowledge have prevented appropriate participation in the work, the student has to scrutinize his/her response to the various aspects of the text to achieve comprehension (Rosenblatt, 1960). Hence, the teacher needs to focus on the following claims:

- Bring students and books together.
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- Give them as many different types of literature as possible.
- Encourage honest and open responses.
- Challenge them to explore those responses and learn something about themselves.
- Encourage toleration.
- Encourage mutual understanding.

Methodology

Research Instruments

The researcher used three research instruments to guarantee triangulation: a structured questionnaire handed out to 70 students, classroom observation, and the analysis of students’ extended essays. The teacher observed two groups, and scrutinized the students’ written productions in 2019-2020. The researcher also analyzed her learners’ written assignments in 2021, and observed five groups. Each group includes 25 students, approximately 125. The results are studied qualitatively and quantitatively to ensure research validity and credibility.

Participants

The research sample is university students who enrolled during the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to continue their second year at Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida, Algeria. The investigation is a case study that involves plenty of university learners whom the researcher selected randomly. The investigator carried out this work in two academic years and with different learners to assure research reliability. Accordingly, the experimental groups of students in 2019-2020 are different from the learners of 2020-2021.

Findings

The teacher appointed two short stories. The first one is “30 Days Carrying my Wife,” and the second story is “Eveline.” These two literary texts are designed for both the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

Analysis of Students’ Questionnaire

Q1: When reading a literary text, do you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You read for joy</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You compare your culture with the target one</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>85.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read critically</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You connect the story’s event</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>71.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make moral reasoning</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above explains that twenty-five (25) out of seventy (70) informants reported that they read for joy; 35.71% represents the minority. Sixty (60) out of seventy (70) informants indicated that while reading, a text they compare their mother culture with the target one. 85.71% embodies the most of the learners; therefore, using the target culture in foreign classrooms is crucial. Fifty (50) out of seventy (70) respondents presumed that when tackling a text, they connect the sequence of stories’ facts and events. It is also worth noting that 40 out of seventy
(70) (57.14 %) claimed that they read critically. Thirty (30) out of seventy (70) (42.85%) of informants stated that they make moral reasoning.

**Q2:** While reading, do you?

Table 2. *Students’ Analysis of the Text after Reading*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret and analyze</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>71.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infer and evaluate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be creative</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two suggests that forty (40) out of seventy (70) informants (57.14%) explain words and events while reading. Fifty (50) out of seventy (70) interpret and analyze the text to understand; thereby, they can answer the teacher’s comprehension questions. Sixty (60) out of seventy (70) (60%) respondents which serve as the sweeping majority infer and evaluate the authentic material. All the students (100%) become creative after reading the assigned text.

**Observation**

The teacher-researcher assigned a text for five groups in the academic year 2020-2021. The story is entitled “30 Days Carrying my Wife.” Then, the tutor gave around thirty (30) minutes to read it carefully. While observing, some learners pretended to read, others read attentively. After finishing the assigned text, the teacher commenced asking some questions to evaluate and test the students’ comprehension. The questions varied and posed from the easiest to the most complex one.

Second-year students enjoyed the text because it was first and foremost selective and social. Therefore, it stimulates the students’ attention and emotions. Furthermore, the author’s language and style were understandable and straightforward.

**Post Reading**

The Reader-Response Theory incorporates great paramount in teaching literary texts and writing summaries at the end of the session. To implement the RRT, the researcher relied on strategies that would enhance the students’ thinking skills. These techniques encompass the teacher’s comprehension questions; inquiring the learners facilitates understanding. Subsequently, they will be able to see how the text is structured.

In other words, the teacher-researcher administered Rosenblatt’s theory (2005) for applying The Reader-Response Theory in which the students did two different kinds of readings:

a- Efferent reading.

b- Aesthetic reading.

First of all, the assigned material, “30 Days Carrying my Wife,” was a story that triggers the students’ attention, for it is a romantic academic text. Hence, students read it for joy since it was a designed task. Secondly, students read it because they had to extract some meanings and draw conclusions.
The Efferent Reading

The teacher urged her students to read the story for information. The tutor asked the learners to read the story in the classroom and then assigned some comprehension questions for the ultimate purpose of guiding the students. The students enjoyed the short story and was effortless and manageable to scrutinize the text because the teacher asked them to extract details such as: when and where the story takes place? And introduce the protagonists, etc. The teacher often made her students predict what would happen next in the short story to stimulate their interest. Additionally, she asked them to read profoundly about the focal events, and ask them to underline the significant facts to restate the story’s incidents using their structure of sentences. The overarching objective of efferent reading is to unveil the students to the various steps that they ought to go through when undertaking a text.

Reading centers primarily on what will last after tackling a text, such as learning new vocabulary, knowing how to move from one event to another (the logical order of facts). For instance, in the academic year 2020-2021, students are assigned “Eveline” and are urged to read between the lines; to know about “Eveline” and her family, her love, and the reasons that made her crave for escaping Dublin. Furthermore, the focal point to be revealed about this short story is assuming responsibility and keeping promises. Dealing with ‘Eveline,’ students infer (oral discussion) that people endure some family problems as the protagonist and that teenagers elope in Algeria owing to domestic violence, poverty, and oppression. Learners provided numerous instances that created a hot conversation.

Aesthetic Reading

Students must explore the text and engage deeply in the text’s experience. In the conclusion of “30 Days Carrying my Wife,” which has a moral lesson as it is a piece of advice given by the author, the teacher plumbed the students’ emotions in that; they compared their relationships. In other words, the author reported at the end of his story that what seems unimportant and uninteresting in a relationship is what matters; not the mansion, the car, money but minor details in one’s life are crucial. Some students nodded; that implies that they join the writer’s point of view, which states that ‘tiny details could also encompass a simple smile.’

More importantly, the teacher urged the students to read and generate meanings; thus, compare the target culture with their own because literature and culture are intimately bound up and complement each other. It is worth mentioning that culture is a vehicle by which literature emanates values and beliefs. Literature is a deep ocean and has an airtight impact on culture. Therefore, EFL teachers ought to integrate the former as a significant component in foreign language classrooms for the prime aim of becoming acclimatized to the target culture. Hence, it is relevant to get different cultures and build bonds to the students’ realm.

Analysis of Students’ Written Productions

After reading, the tutor asked her learners to rewrite the assigned texts “30 Days Carrying my Wife” and “Eveline” using what they have understood from Efferent and Aesthetic readings. The teacher also gave a task and requested her students to write a book report on the authentic material, from the setting moving to the climax shifting to the end of the story. The teacher asked the learners the following:

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- Suggest another title.
- State the place and the time.
- Introduce the protagonists.
- Summarize the focal events.
- Summarize the end of the story.
- Create a different ending.

The tutor asked her students to use their vocabulary, grammar, and different writing mechanics. Most importantly, she also urged them to create their end to boost their critical thinking skills. In this part, students were creative; each learner provided his/her ending of the short story, which was satisfactory.

After scrutinizing the learners’ extended essays, the researcher noticed that students did not find a significant hurdle with paraphrasing and summarizing techniques because they already tackled these strategies in methodology. They found it accessible to summarize the assigned text taking into consideration the tutor’s instructions. Most importantly, applying the Reader-Response Theory helped the learners generate sense and compare the target culture with their mother culture, especially when debating in the classroom. It is worth noting that utilizing what they have learned in grammar was quite complex and thorny because the sweeping majority is mistaken when using the past tense.

Discussion

To apply the RRT, the researcher asked several questions to the learners (to commence a dialogue) for the ultimate purpose of facilitating comprehension and showing them how to analyze a literary text. Asking comprehension questions drove the students to compare the two cultures; for example, it was manageable for them to conclude on the foreign culture. Most importantly, teaching short stories using the Reader-Response Theory enables the students to analyze and imagine themselves in the story’s characters. Some of them were able to bring their prior experiences into the classroom. Notably, students summarized the short stories using their vocabulary and enjoyed listening to each other’s end.

The students’ questionnaire results equal those of the observation and those of the analysis of the written assignments. Learners read intensively (aesthetic reading) because the text is exciting and has cultural meanings. Additionally, students come up with inferences and compare their culture with the foreign one when the teacher facilitates comprehension by asking different questions from general to specific. Inquiring learners about the texts moving from the straightforward question to the end creates a debate among the students thus, raising their cultural awareness and communicative competence.

In brief, the obtained results in 2019-2020 go hand in hand with those of 2020-2021. Thereby, the Reader-Response Theory enhances EFL students’ skills and language competencies. Second-year students generate several responses from reading texts such as explaining events, evaluating the author’s language, comparing cultures, reasoning, inferring, and write summaries of the assigned short stories. Ningrum (2018) quoted My Van (2009), who asserted that the students’ responses entail the readers’ feelings, experiences, and knowledge.
background. Accordingly, the teacher has to select a suitable text that meets the students’ English proficiency and needs. An appropriate literary text has to immerse learners and engage them in the reading-writing processes.

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The focal objective of this piece of work is to provide a holistic idea of the Reader-Response Theory to teaching short stories and how the teacher applied it with second-year students. Having students create meanings from the text makes them aware of different interpretations of the literary material and would feel free to express themselves. The Reader-Response theory makes the students motivated, autonomous, and eager to know more about the text they have read. When getting prior experience and comparing the target culture with their own, a new adventure is appreciated. Applying the RRT guides the students towards thinking critically, and therefore be creative. Using the RRT enables EFL students to employ the English language via literature and teaches them to listen to other classmates. To conclude, teaching literature is fundamental and ought to have a place in the EFL classroom since it boosts the students’ thinking skills and enhances creativity.

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Synchronous and Asynchronous English Writing Classes in the EFL Context: Students’ Practices and Benefits

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Abstract
Synchronous and asynchronous classes were implemented by universities around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) engaged in multiple practices when attending English writing classes in both modes. However, the practices they engaged in and the benefits they perceived were reportedly of limited benefit. This study asks: What are the practices of students that emerge during synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes? What are the benefits of synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes from the student's perspective? Group and one-to-one interviews were conducted with twelve students majoring in computer science and information technology at a Saudi university. Thematic analysis revealed that students engage in practices including using the split view on iPads, opening additional windows to search for information, searching using smartphone apps, and writing notes and highlighting key concepts when attending English writing classes regardless of learning mode. It also revealed that synchronous classes offered students real-time communication and provided immediate feedback, while asynchronous classes allowed students to navigate the challenges of distance learning, complementing the synchronous English writing classes and providing students with a sense of security. This paper concludes by advising language teachers to record synchronous classes, raise students’ awareness of the benefits of attending both types of classes and encourage students to apply practices reported by previous students to maximize their English language learning.

Keywords: asynchronous class, benefits, English writing, practices, synchronous class

Introduction

In 2020, educational systems globally were forced to adapt and adopt remote teaching via online platforms to serve students due to the lockdowns initiated to limit the spread of COVID-19. Since then, English language researchers in both Second Language (ESL) and Foreign Language (EFL) contexts have investigated the effects of the changes made on language learner’s performance, attitudes, trajectories and overall learning progress (Al-Nofaie, 2020; Alahmad & Alraddadi, 2020; Almelhi, 2021; Bailey, Almusharraf, & Hatcher, 2020; Bin Dahmash, 2020a; Hashmi, Rajab, & Ali Shah, 2021; Mahyoob, 2020; Shahzad et al., 2020; Syahrin & Salih, 2020). This sudden essential switch to online classrooms changed educational policy in a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia. Previously, Saudi policymakers had not welcomed the option of teaching and learning 100% online. Indeed, Saudi universities had suspended distance education in 2017, and so, during COVID-19 four universities were granted permission to provide distance programs (“After a hiatus of three years”, 2020). Today, however, the Saudi Ministry of Education is considering continuing online classrooms after pandemic restrictions are lifted (Abueish, 2020).

Prior to the changes adopted as a result of COVID-19, language education researchers had asserted a need to explore the effectiveness and validity of virtual classrooms for teaching English (M. H. Al-Qahtani, 2019; M. S. Al-Qahtani, 2019). Therefore, unsurprisingly, many language researchers utilized the opportunities to collect additional data during the pandemic, to document and interrogate the learning styles of students in an online skill-based classroom (Syahrin & Salih, 2020), highlighting the challenges encountered by students in synchronous classes, including technical problems and limited access to resources (Bin Dahmash, 2020a).

The focus of the present study is on synchronous and asynchronous classes; specifically the practices of EFL students in a Saudi university. It aims to scrutinize the benefits of classes from the perspectives of the students themselves. It poses the following questions:

1. What are the practices of students that emerge during synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes?
2. What are the benefits of synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes from the student’s perspective?

Definition of Practice

The term ‘practice’ is defined in Merriam Webster Dictionary as “the usual way of doing something” (“practice”, 2021). In this paper, ‘practice’ is used to refer to the conventional way in which students attend synchronous or asynchronous English writing classes and the activities and tools they utilize when engaging in these classes.

Literature Review

Definitions of Synchronous and Asynchronous Classes

The definitions of synchronous (in real-time) and asynchronous (at any time) classes are associated in the literature with online learning, blended learning, distance learning, virtual classes and e-learning. For example, Sharma and Westbrook (2016) mentioned ‘synchronous’ in reference to online and blended learning used in the field of language learning and technology. They identified an overlap between the two concepts, noting both refer to:
Situations where students are being taught synchronously using tools such as Skype, Adobe Connect, Wiziq Blackboard Collaborate -in effect, face to face learning at a distance-as well as situations that include anything that does not take place in the classroom. (Sharma & Westbrook, 2016, p. 321)

This definition uses online and distance learning interchangeably to refer to situations where asynchronous real-time teaching mode is used outside the classroom via tools that enable the students to connect with the teacher via Internet, as in Blackboard Collaborate. However, the learning materials can also be posted on any online platform so students can access them asynchronously. Blended learning differs from online learning as it requires a physical place for conducting classes and disseminating learning content. If a course is conducted 100% online, it is “OL [online learning] not BL [blended learning]” (Sharma, 2017, p. 170). Mahyoob (2020) uses e-learning, virtual learning and online learning interchangeably to refer to various activities performed by language learners studying English via Internet platforms. These three terms referred to synchronized classes offered via Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft teams and Blackboard, as well as content posted on Blackboard. They also referred to the mode of sending and collecting assignments from students via WhatsApp groups or emails. Accordingly, all modes, whether synchronous or asynchronous involve online learning.

‘Online’ and ‘e-learning’ were used to refer to distance education when real-time sessions were taught via Blackboard or Zoom (Hashmi et al., 2021). The term ‘virtual classes’ was used to refer to classes ‘synchronously’ delivered, and when contacting students in real-time via Blackboard or Microsoft teams (Alahmad & Alraddadi, 2020; M. S. Al-Qahtani, 2019). The real-time virtual classes via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra were described as synchronous classes, and were implemented to teach an intensive English course at King Saud University, while asynchronous classes refer to recorded synchronous classes (Bin Dahmash, 2020a). Similar to Bin Dahmash (2020a), Al-No'fa'ie (2020) used the terms synchronous referring to real-time classes and asynchronous to refer to the discussion board and assignments students accessed on Blackboard. The two concepts were not always treated as two distinct modes, and were used to describe the activities and videos that were delivered via virtual classes on Blackboard without making a distinction between these two concepts (Almelhi, 2021).

In this study, synchronous and asynchronous classes were defined as two distinct modes of distance learning where 100% of classes were delivered online. Synchronous classes were English writing sessions delivered in real-time via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. Asynchronous classes were recorded synchronous English writing sessions uploaded on Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to allow students to view content throughout the academic term.

Online Learning During COVID-19

Research into online ESL/EFL learning at the university level during COVID-19, whether synchronous or asynchronous, has attracted scholars interested in both language and pedagogy. In the Saudi context, several studies have explored the effects of online learning on students from either the students’ or the teachers’ perspectives, or both, during this period (Al-No'fa'ie, 2020; Alahmad & Alraddadi, 2020; Almelhi, 2021; Bin Dahmash, 2020a; Hashmi et al., 2021; Mahyoob, 2020). In other countries, four studies were conducted on English language learners to understand online learning during the pandemic (Bailey et al., 2020; Ghounane, 2020; Shahzad
et al., 2020; Syahrin & Salih, 2020). These are explored in detail below to identify the focus for the current study.

In their research, Alahmad and Alraddadi (2020) examined the effects of virtual classes on classroom interaction in a university in Saudi Arabia during the pandemic. They used a questionnaire to elicit the views of 90 students studying an intensive English course. The interaction and participation of students in synchronous real-time class were examined. They found that virtual classes promoted interactions between the students themselves and between students and their teachers. Virtual classes were also found to encourage shy students to participate in classroom discussions and to assist them in overcoming their anxiety and improving their language skills.

Applying a case study methodology, Al-Nofaie (2020) elicited the opinions of 25 students concerning the benefits and problems experienced using the synchronous and asynchronous features of Blackboard at a Saudi university during the pandemic. Her participants studied in the English language department, received a Morphology course via synchronous lectures on Blackboard and used learning materials posted asynchronously on Blackboard. She also analyzed students’ learning logs. She discovered that students favored asynchronous features over synchronous ones due to their flexibility and reported encountering difficulties focusing on lectures at home due to distractions. She also found asynchronous features helped shy students participate via text on the discussion board, thereby improving their language skills.

The benefits and challenges of online learning were further explored in a qualitative study conducted by Bin Dahmash (2020a) in a Saudi university. She examined the use of synchronous virtual lectures, online tests and educational content posted via Blackboard for an intensive English course available during COVID-19. The study involved a focus group and one-to-one interviews with twelve students. Synchronous classes were found to support students’ English writing skills by offering tasks focused on spelling and grammar. Students were motivated to search online via Google and YouTube to supplement their English learning and the classes were suited to students’ needs and circumstances as well as their family responsibilities. The students reported encountering technical problems that impeded their understanding, such as sound problems and internet connection issues.

In 2020, Mahyoob explored the obstacles and challenges encountered when implementing online learning during COVID-19 from the perspective of students majoring in the English language at a Saudi university. He collected data from 184 students with a questionnaire and identified that they had technical difficulties accessing virtual classes on Blackboard and expressed a preference for other platforms. According to Hashmi et al. (2021), who used questionnaires to collect the views of 265 language teachers at four universities; 80% of teachers used Blackboard to teach using a synchronous lecturing mode during the pandemic, and observed students reported limited access due to technical problems. Students were not trained in online learning and claimed to miss the classroom interaction, and found it difficult navigating online and accessing the materials posted there. Their students were also increasingly disappointed and demotivated to learn English.
The role of Blackboard in delivering English courses was explored by Almelhi (2021). To accomplish this goal, he measured the attitudes and perceptions of 47 EFL instructors and 103 students taking English courses at King Khalid University, applying quantitative methods. He designed two questionnaires and distributed them, one for instructors and the other for students. He found that the students perceived Blackboard to be a cost-saving and time-saving tool and an efficient tool for communication. He also found that Blackboard motivated students to learn English and assisted them in self-pacing their language learning. He asserted:

[T]he most common reasons students liked the VLE of Blackboard could be convenience of use, platform availability, system quality and quality of e-learning over Blackboard. Other reasons include users’ personal factors such as their satisfaction tendency, their self-confidence initiated by the VLE of Blackboard, their enjoyment of learning in this medium, the interesting and useful learning activities and tools as well as their staying safe in this mode of learning in the pandemic time. (Almelhi, 2021, p. 60)

In a study by Bailey et al. (2020) conducted at a South Korean university, students’ intrinsic motivation during collaborative asynchronous writing practice and synchronous video speaking practice via an online course were explored. Their study drew on a quantitative methodology and distributed a cross-sectional survey to 186 students and an open-ended survey to 65 students. Asynchronous writing classes were found to assist students in learning new vocabulary, increase their opportunities to practice writing and develop their skills in English grammar. Moreover, synchronous video-speaking practice assisted students in communicating with their classmates and their instructors, improved their pronunciation and conversation skills, and increased their confidence when speaking English.

In the context of an Algerian university, Ghounane (2020) examined e-learning in the form of virtual learning via Zoom, Google Classroom and Moodle and the learning tools EFL students were engaged in during COVID-19. The research involved 90 students who completed a questionnaire and eight teachers who were interviewed. The students reported a preference for Moodle as a formal setting to attend lectures and engage in activities. In addition, students used Facebook and YouTube to interact with teachers and classmates. A questionnaire was also used by Shahzad et al. (2020) to elicit the views of 100 students at a Pakistani university. They evaluated the effect of virtual teaching during COVID-19 on English language learners’ attitudes. The students were committed and motivated to learn via virtual learning settings; they found virtual lectures convenient, and were able to communicate with their teacher via voice and text to receive a quick reply. The research also revealed that virtual learning boosted students’ confidence and happiness and relieved frustration and worry. At an Omani university, Syahrin and Salih (2020) used a questionnaire combined with content and course activities analysis to evaluate the success of asynchronous online learning. They investigated the experiences of 32 students accessing online classrooms via Moodle (a learning management system) during the pandemic. They concluded that online learning mainly benefits listening and reading skills and neglects speaking and writing skills.

The studies by Al-Nofaie (2020), Alahmad and Alraddadi (2020), Bailey et al. (2020), Mahyoob (2020), Syahrin and Salih (2020), Almelhi (2021), and Ghounane (2020) utilized quantitative tools (i.e. a questionnaire) and did not interview students. The participants were asked to rate statements based on a five point Likert-scale. In addition, the studies by Al-Nofaie (2020), Alahmad and Alraddadi (2020), Bailey et al. (2020), Mahyoob (2020), Shahzad et al.
Syahrin and Salih (2020) and Bin Dahmash (2020a) did not ask students about their personal practices, or the activities they engage in when attending synchronous virtual live classes. Therefore, the current study offers unique and valuable insights by drawing on group interviews and one-to-one interviews to explore the practices of university students attending synchronous classes.

The learning described in the above studies was not 100% online, as these started partially or fully as a face-to-face language learning classes and moved online in response to COVID-19 restrictions. The students therefore had met their classmates and their teacher in person, and had attended some classes physically. In addition, these studies did not explore asynchronous classes based on recordings of synchronous sessions, and the perspectives of language learners were not examined. However, Almelhi (2021) reported that 93% of students participating in virtual classes on Blackboard preferred synchronous classes to recorded ones but did not explore this result in interviews. The current study addresses these gaps by examining classes where 100% of learning was delivered online, and explores the benefits and practices engaged in by students in asynchronous classes.

**Methodology**

This study drew on a qualitative research methodology in the domain of Applied Linguistics, using ‘narrative inquiry’ to “document language learners’ and teachers’ development, practices, identity, agency, beliefs, emotion, positionality, and motivation” (Lew et al., 2018, p. 88). Interviews are helpful for collecting in-depth data about participant’s experiences (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and group interviews are valuable:

> [W]hen the researcher seeks to elicit a range of responses to produce a more holistic picture of a group’s or community’s (shared and divergent) perspectives on their sociolinguistic experiences, perspectives, resources, practices, and so on. (Prior, 2018, p. 234)

Thus, one-to-one and group interviews were used to generate a comprehensive picture of the practices of students engaged in synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes, and to collect their perspectives concerning these two modes.

**Research Procedures**

Data were collected in two stages commencing at the end of December 2020 and lasting for seven weeks. The first stage involved conducting two group interviews, and the second stage the one-to-one interviews. Data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic when meeting people physically was only possible if following precautionary measures such as wearing face masks and repeatedly sterilizing surfaces and hands. Therefore, all interviews, whether group or one-to-one, were conducted online via a platform selected by the participants. Group interviews were completed on WhatsApp groups in two sessions: six participants each. One-to-one interviews were completed involving eleven participants over WhatsApp.

**Participants**

Participants were recruited via a sampling process referred to as ‘chain sampling’ (Dörnyei, 2007). The participants were recruited by the researcher, who contacted a key participant who then invited other participants to join the study. Participants were selected
according to sampling criteria; i.e., they had to have recently completed an English writing course in a department in which the course was delivered synchronously and asynchronously as part of departmental policy. All the participants received an information text message via WhatsApp detailing the study aims, tools, and their right to withdraw from the sample at the time of data collection without providing reasons, also reiterating that participation is voluntary. The participants were twelve female students majoring in computer science and information technology at a Saudi university.

Data Analysis

The study drew on Ayres’s (2008) thematic coding and thematic analysis. The data analysis process was aided by ATLAS.ti, a computer software designed for data analysis to enhance validity (Cohen et al., 2018). The software assisted the researcher in maintaining consistency and reliability when coding the data (Creswell, 2014). Lists of themes were created after coding the interviews to answer the two research questions.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the results from the current study in relation to the research questions and the previous literature.

Research Question (1): What Are the Practices of Students that Emerge during Synchronous and Asynchronous English Writing Classes?

The data suggests students engage in various practices when attending both synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes. These involve English writing class modes as one practice occurred in the synchronous class only and another practice occurred in the asynchronous class only (see Figure.1).

![Figure 1. Practices on synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes](image-url)
Practices Shared on Synchronous and Asynchronous English Writing Classes

The students reported that they engage in multiple practices when attending English writing classes regardless of mode. These practices were: (1) use the split view on an iPad, (2) open an additional window to search for information, (3) search using smartphone apps, and (4) write notes and highlight key concepts.

Use the Split View on an iPad

Attending English writing classes from the iPad provided participants with the ability to use a feature called Split View. Split View allows iPad users to view two different apps by splitting the iPad screen equally into two parts separated by a bold vertical line. This allows the iPad user to view two windows on one screen simultaneously. Participant (12) reported that she prepares her iPad before class by opening two iPad apps: Safari and Pdf Reader. She clarified that she watches English writing classes on Blackboard Collaborate Ultra in one view, and uses the other view to add notes and highlight concepts using an Apple pencil. She stated, “I use the other view as if I was using a real pen and paper”. Another participant, participant (3), reported using Split View allowed her to attend the class and see the required textbook simultaneously. She stated, “the first view is more like attending the face-to-face class and the second view is more like following what the teacher says on a real book in a real class”. It seems the Split-View iPad feature provided participants with an innovative learning option, enabling them to develop new practices inspired by their past experience in attending face-to-face classes. They visualized attending a face-to-face class in one view and writing notes and highlighting concepts in a book on the other view.

Open an Additional Window to Search for Information

Attending English writing classes from a computer or laptop allowed participants to open an additional window when searching for particular information. Participants in group interview (2) explained that they open a new window frequently when attending English writing classes, whether synchronous or asynchronous classes. Participant (8) explained she does this when requiring further information related to the course. She stated, “I listen to the class and search for particular information at the same time to fully understand the content when I don’t understand the teacher”. Participants in a group interview (1) reported using search engines such as Google to gather information, even when redirected to YouTube. Using YouTube to search for information is consistent with results reported by Bin Dahmash (2020a), who found that students were motivated to search via YouTube after trying out synchronous classes and corresponds with the results of Bin Dahmash (2021) regarding the practices language learners were engaged in during the COVID-19 crisis in Saudi Arabia.

Search Using Smartphone Apps

Among the practices, students reported engaging in while attending English writing classes were searching using two smartphone apps: Google and Google Translate.

Participants in group interview (1) reported searching using the Google app on their smartphones during English writing classes. Participant (3) stated, “I opened Google app and typed how to summarize a text when I was listening to the teacher explaining writing summaries”. She explained that summarizing material in English was challenging, and she wanted to learn an easier way to complete this task.
The majority of the participants reported using the Google Translate App to discover the meaning of words and phrases in Arabic.

You mentioned you use the Google Translate App. Can you explain further?

The biggest barrier on this course is the language and I needed to search for the meaning of some words from English to Arabic.

Agree. This course needs someone who has mastered English.

This is why I always use Google Translate App.

During the live session or recorded session?

Doesn’t matter, any session.

Me too.

Same.

I am used to doing this. Open my phone and type the words I don’t understand.

I take a photo of the screen to translate the text instantly.

(Excerpt from group interview (2) translated from Arabic)

This excerpt demonstrates that students utilize the Google Translate App to identify the meaning of unfamiliar English words in both English writing classes. Participant (4) reported that her English is weak, and that she hoped to get high grades for her English writing course and used the Google Translate App to assist her. She stated, “this translates superfast. I don’t waste my time and type… I just take a photo and all the text is translated from English to Arabic”.

The students’ practices using the App seem to be triggered by their aspiration to improve their English, as they are majoring in computer science. They expressed a need and desire to excel in English writing and develop their skills in computing, as all the resources and high-quality papers in their field were in English. They used the Google Translate App as a tool to boost their understanding of key concepts and to internalize learning content. This result confirms the findings reported in previous studies (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017; Bin Dahmash, 2020b; Bin Dahmash, 2021; Tsai, 2019) stating that using the Google Translate App enhances learners’ capacity in English.

Write Notes and Highlight Key Concepts

Writing notes and highlighting key concepts were among the practices students engaged in when attending English writing classes. These practices were carried out in paper format and digital format.

The majority of the participants in group interview (1) reported downloading and printing the PowerPoint slides posted on the Blackboard platform before the live session, so as to write
notes and the dates on them. Participant (4) indicated that she writes the dates on slides to assist her in locating asynchronous sessions to continue writing notes. She stated, “writing the date helped me in finding the recorded session. They were arranged according to date and I watched the recorded session to write the notes”. Participant (1) explained that writing notes on a paper-format (whether on the textbook or printed slides) assisted her in understanding key concepts during classes, as well as assisted her in focusing on improving her English writing. Similarly, participant (2) explained that before synchronous classes, she prepares her environment, ensuring she has materials and tools ready; i.e. textbooks, printed slides, pens, and highlighters. She indicated that writing notes on paper reinforces her understanding of writing skills in English, and helps her focus on her goal of “making my English writing better”.

Producing notes in a digital format was reportedly among practices that were engaged in during English writing classes. Participant (3) explained that she uses the Note App on her smartphone to write notes during classes as she does not like touching papers. She clarified that she selects English letters from the touch keypad on her smartphone. Participant (12) reported a similar practice using the Note App on her smartphone, which automatically synchronizes to her Note App on her iPad. She explained that she does not transfer what she has written on her smartphone as the technology does that for her. Participant (12) also reported adding notes to the textbook via the Pdf Reader App using an Apple pencil. She highlights parts of the textbook and uses different highlighting colors on the App, stating, “I use the Apple pencil on iPad and normally write on smartphone”. These accounts of writing notes in a digital format reflect the students’ creative use of technology, especially multitasking with ease and confidence. From their accounts, they did not express feeling overwhelmed or being stressed when performing multiple entangled practices digitally.

**Synchronous English Writing Classes Practice: Screenshot Particular Content**

Taking a screenshot of valuable content was mentioned only in reference to the synchronous English writing classes. In group interview (2), the participants explained that they screenshot during live sessions, as they cannot quickly write what is on the slides, especially when the teacher uses a different PowerPoint presentation. Participant (2) indicated that she keeps screenshots in a separate file on her computer and prints them out when studying for exams. Participant (7) reported taking screenshots to enable her to write notes after the session and to delete the screenshot after that. She stated, “I don’t want to confuse myself, so I write the notes and then delete these screenshots”. This indicates that participants perform the practice of screenshots during synchronous classes, but differ in how they deal with them. Some print them out and use them as a source of learning, while others keep them for a limited time.

**Asynchronous English Writing Classes Practice: Pause and Re-watch Particular Content**

Pausing and re-watching particular content only took place in the asynchronous class. The participants indicated that the ability to pause and watch certain parts was what distinguishes recorded sessions from live ones. All the participants mentioned performing the practice of pausing and re-watching classes whenever they played recorded sessions.

**Research Question (2): What are the Benefits of Synchronous and Asynchronous English Writing Classes from the Students’ Perspective?**
The data suggests that attending both synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes enabled students to benefit from both. This section discusses these benefits separately (see Figure 2).

**Benefits of Synchronous English Writing Classes**

- Real-time communication with the teacher.
- Provide students with immediate feedback.

**Benefits of Asynchronous English Writing Classes**

- Negotiating distance learning challenges.
- Being flexible.
- Complementing the synchronous English writing class
- Improving the students' listening and pronunciation skills.
- Providing students with a sense of security.

**Figure 2. Benefits of synchronous and asynchronous English writing classes**

**Benefits of Synchronous English Writing Classes**

The data suggests the advantages of synchronous classes were real-time communication and the provision of immediate feedback. The participants in group interview (2) explained synchronous classes were interactive, enabling them to communicate their questions regarding lesson content and to receive an immediate answer. They observed that having the opportunity to ask questions verbally by turning their mics on, or posting questions in the chat box in writing saves time when communicating with teachers in real-time. Participant (5) asserted that live sessions facilitate communication with the teacher, and that without them she would have to compose an email containing questions and wait for the teacher to reply. This is consistent with the results reported by Shahzad et al. (2020), Bailey et al. (2020), and Almelhi (2021), who found virtual synchronous classes helped students communicate with their teachers. It is also consistent with the results reported by Ja'ashan (2020), who found e-learning enhanced students’ communication. It contradicts the findings of M. S. Al-Qahtani (2019), who reported that students had limited communications with both their teacher and classmates, as attending virtual classes isolated them from the outside world.

Besides providing real-time communication with the teacher, synchronous classes afforded students immediate feedback. Participant (2) indicated that live sessions offered her opportunities to check her understanding and receive instant feedback at the end of classes. According to her, instant feedback increased her motivation and encouraged her to learn. The participants in group interview (1) noted that rapid feedback is essential and only happens during live sessions. This
result echoed the findings reported by Al Bataineh, Banikalef, and Albashtawi (2019), that blended learning ensures immediate feedback.

**Benefits of Asynchronous English Writing Classes**

The students listed five benefits of asynchronous writing classes, outnumbering the benefits of the synchronous classes. First, asynchronous classes assisted students in negotiating distance learning challenges such as: 1) technical problems, and 2) the inability to separate between the learning environment and the home environment. The participants in group interview (2) indicated that the recorded sessions were beneficial when their internet connection was intermittent and the sound unclear. Similarly, participant (4) stated that sometimes she encounters technical problems, such as a poor Internet connection, or a power cut, and so the recorded session provides useful back up. The majority of participants found separating the learning environment and home environment challenging. Participant (1) mentioned family responsibilities; she is a mother and has a daughter who studies online during her live sessions and sometimes she has to check if her daughter is following along with her classes. She stated, “the recorded session solved crisis as I often stop for a few minutes to see if my daughter who is in primary stage is doing fine with her online school”. Participant (9) indicated that focusing during the live session was difficult, as being at home prevents her from controlling what happens around her, and so the recorded session bridges any gaps. Thus, asynchronous sessions resolve the difficulties identified by Bin Dahmash (2020a), Hashmi et al. (2021), Al-Nofaie (2020), Almelhi (2021), who reported that synchronous classes during COVID-19 were disadvantaged by technical and social challenges.

The second benefit mentioned was flexibility, as the participants in group interview (1) mentioned being able to watch recorded sessions from anywhere at any time; some stated that they would record the sessions themselves if the university stopped uploading asynchronous classes. Participant (2) indicated that she sometimes watches the session repeatedly focusing on certain parts until she has fully absorbed the content. The flexibility and convenience asynchronous lectures provide to students correspond with the results reported by Bukhari and Basaffar (2019), Shahzad et al. (2020), Al Bataineh, Banikalef, and Albashtawi (2019), Al-Nofaie (2020), Bin Dahmash (2020a) and Almelhi (2021), who found learning via online virtual settings was convenient and flexible.

Complementing the synchronous writing classes was reported as one of the benefits of asynchronous writing classes.

[28/12/2020, 4:54:13 pm] Participant (2): With all the assignments I cannot focus during the live sessions, but still the live sessions are important.

[28/12/2020, 4:54:32 pm] Participant (3): Homework and live sessions take the entire day literally! I am left with no mind at all and sometimes I cannot understand during the live sessions.


[28/12/2020, 4:55:00 pm] Participant (2): I try to focus on the live sessions, but I cannot always succeed ... and I watched the
The fourth benefit of asynchronous writing classes is in improving students' listening and pronunciation skills. Participant (4) reported that she repeatedly watched the recorded session to imitate her teacher’s pronunciation of English words. Participant (7) indicated that playing the recorded session improved her listening skills, as she could listen several times to difficult parts. This benefit correlates with the findings of M. S. Al-Qahtani (2019), Al-Nofaie (2020), Alahmad and Alraddadi (2020), Bailey et al. (2020) and Bin Dahmash (2020a), that language learning online via virtual classes enhanced students’ English language skills.

The last benefit reported was the sense of security asynchronous sessions provide. Participant (3) noted that she feels reassured by having recorded sessions uploaded on Blackboard, even if she does not always review them. The participants in group interview (1) agreed, indicating that they watch the recorded sessions before exams and assignments to reinforce what they have learnt, and that this option improves their confidence. Thus, the asynchronous classes enhanced the students’ comfort levels and reduced anxiety. This finding suggests they could reduce the “affective filter” identified by Krashen (1981), when linking anxiety and negative feelings on the part of learners to difficulty in learning an additional language.

Conclusion and Implications

The students engaged in multiple practices in both English writing class modes, synchronous and asynchronous. For example, using the split view on their iPads, opening an additional window to search for information, searching using smartphone Apps, and writing notes and highlighting key concepts. They only screenshots particular content during recorded session to catch up with what I had missed, even when I was there in person. This is one of the advantages of recorded sessions.

This excerpt demonstrates how asynchronous classes complement synchronous classes by giving participants an additional opportunity to comprehend lesson content. They explained that asynchronous classes are not seen as a substitute for synchronous classes but as a valuable supplement. Participant (12) indicated that accessing recorded sessions allowed her to fulfil her learning objectives by filling in details missed during synchronous classes.

The last benefit reported was the sense of security asynchronous sessions provide. Participant (3) noted that she feels reassured by having recorded sessions uploaded on Blackboard, even if she does not always review them. The participants in group interview (1) agreed, indicating that they watch the recorded sessions before exams and assignments to reinforce what they have learnt, and that this option improves their confidence. Thus, the asynchronous classes enhanced the students’ comfort levels and reduced anxiety. This finding suggests they could reduce the “affective filter” identified by Krashen (1981), when linking anxiety and negative feelings on the part of learners to difficulty in learning an additional language.
synchronous classes, and they paused and re-watched content during asynchronous classes. These practices were creative and reflected the student’s proficiency with technology. The benefits of the synchronous class were fewer than the benefits of the asynchronous ones according to the students. The primary benefit of synchronous classes was that they offer real-time communication and provide them with access to immediate feedback. The asynchronous class, on the other hand, benefited students by assisting them in coping with various distance learning challenges, being flexible, complementing the synchronous English writing class, improving their listening and pronunciation skills, and providing them with a sense of security.

Based on these findings, a number of implications were proposed to improve the process of language learning in synchronous and asynchronous classes. Teachers were advised to record synchronous classes based on the benefits reported in this study and to upload these classes to the online learning system approved by the institution at which the classes were being taught. The teachers then could advise their students to watch the asynchronous classes and explain to them the benefits reported by students, as well as motivating them to watch and boost their language capacity. The teachers could also encourage the students to apply the practices reported in this study when searching for related learning content via smartphone Apps or websites. Policymakers could encourage teachers to record sessions and offer them incentives. The students were advised to prepare the physical environment in which they attend synchronous classes to eliminate distractions.

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Functions of Code Switching from Arabic to English among Jordanian Pilots in their Daily Informal Conversations: A Case Study

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Abstract
This study examines the frequency and the functions of code switching in informal conversations among Jordanian pilots, who have created their own jargon. It also explores the most frequent English expressions that the pilots switch to in their informal Arabic discourse. The conversations of eight Jordanian pilots aged between thirty and fifty-five were tape-recorded in three separate informal natural settings. The data were used for the purpose of finding out what the pragmatic and communicative functions are that the pilots’ code switching serves, and to investigate the most frequent expressions used in their conversations. The results showed that eight main conversational functions can be identified in their code-switching routines, namely: to compensate for the lack of exact equivalents in Arabic, to avoid interruption to the communication when not knowing the Arabic equivalent, to replace long and technical terminology in Arabic with acronyms in English (acronyms are not common in Arabic), to use aviation titles and ranks, to quote/directly report phrases of speakers, to say the numbers, to refer to names of companies, places, documents, and organizations, and to insert some English formulaic expressions. The findings also showed that the most frequent terms and expressions used in code switching amongst Jordanian pilots are more related to the aviation register than to common-core vocabulary.

Keywords: Arabic-English, code switching, functions, informal daily conversations, Jordanian pilots

Introduction

Code switching (CS) is a characteristic feature of the speech of bilingual and multilingual speakers irrespective of geographical location. According to Haugen (1956), “code switching, which is the alternate use of two languages, occurs when a bilingual introduces a completely unassimilated word from another language into this speech” (p. 40). The Arab world is known to have a wide array of nationalities, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds which forge bridges of linguistic and cultural exchange and consequently a state of bilingualism. The increased level of education and the continuous spread of technology are two essential factors that boosted the use of CS among people. For instance, at many universities the language of instruction in major sciences such as accounting, engineering, medicine, as well as aviation is English. These sciences depend heavily on English terminologies that do not have Arabic equivalents or their equivalents in Arabic are rarely used. Consequently, educated non-native speakers of English who study a certain branch of science and share a particular profession usually have a large amount of mutual vocabulary resulting in the emergence of a specialized variety or "register." As a result, people of the same profession start to code-switch unconsciously from their native language to English using their register as an indicator of their group identification when they communicate with each other both at work and in informal settings.

Wardhaugh (2006) posits that CS is used as an important identity marker for a group of speakers who have to use multiple languages in their general “pursuits.” To illustrate this, he gives the example of physicians who code-switch when they talk to each other, and this communication among the physicians about medical topics with CS occurring throughout happens more easily than it would if outsiders to the medical profession were involved in those conversations, and this is due to the fact that the medical professionals possess the needed vocabulary to code-switch, while the layman probably does not possess much of that vocabulary. He also explains that the norms of CS are not fixed; they change from one group to another “even within what might be regarded as a single community,” (p. 106). These norms of CS involve certain factors such as place of residence, social class, and occupation.

The present study investigates an under-researched area of interest, CS involving the aviation register from Arabic to English among Jordanian pilots in their informal daily conversations. It sheds light on the frequency and the functions of CS in informal conversations among the pilots. It also explores the most frequent English expressions that the pilots switch to in their informal Arabic discourse.

Questions of the Study

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types/functions of code switching among Jordanian pilots in their informal natural conversations with each other?
2. What are the most frequent English words/phrases that Jordanian pilots use in their Arabic conversations?

It is hoped that this study would add to the literature by shedding light on further functions of CS that may still be lurking in the informal conversations of Jordanian pilots. Findings of this study are likely to solidify the existing literature in the field of CS, by providing insight into the use of CS in informal spoken exchanges in the aviation register.
Review of Related Literature

Many researchers (e.g., Gumperz, 1982; Auer, 1998; Wardhaugh, 2006) have attempted to define the term conversational CS. Gumperz (1982) defined it as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (p. 59). For Auer (1998), CS is the “alternating use of two or more "codes" within one conversational episode” (p. 1). Wardhaugh (2006), on the other hand, defined it as a process in which

People … are usually required to select a particular code whenever they choose to speak, and they may also decide to switch from one code to another or to mix codes even within sometimes very short utterances and thereby create a new code. (p. 101)

Myers-Scotton's (2006) general definition of CS as “the use of two language varieties in the same conversation” (p. 239) is satisfying so that it will be used as a practical definition throughout this paper.

The linguistic, social, communicative and metaphorical functions of CS as a conversational tool have been a subject of intensive and meticulous research (e.g., Zainil & Arsyad, 2021; Wardhaugh, 2006; Romaine 1995; Gumper, 1982; Hudson, 1980). Gumper (1982) suggested six main conversational functions for CS, namely quotations, addressee specification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization vs. objectivization. For him, the quotation function is used when someone resorts to code witching in order to convey a message to someone else in the form of a quotation or reported speech. The addressee specification is intended to send a specific message to a specific person in a certain setting, while interjection is used when CS serves as sentence filler and usually works as a connector between sentences. Reiteration is used when a message is repeated in the second code; sometimes the repetition is literal, sometimes with some modification. Sampson (2011) states that this type of CS, using both the L2 word and its L1 equivalent, may be used “in order to ensure that the message has been understood by everyone” (p. 4). Message qualification occurs in long utterances when the subject of the sentence is in one code and the predicate is in another. The last function is personalization vs. objectivization, which implies the switch from code to another to show an opinion or a personal feeling about a certain topic. These main conversational functions summarize the need to use a second code in a certain setting.

Romaine (1995) used Poplack's (1980) three different kinds of CS and illustrated every type with examples. The first type is tag switching which “involves the insertion of a tag in one language into an utterance which is otherwise entirely in the other language” (p. 122). Examples given by Romaine are: I mean, I wish, you know, etc. Another type is intersentential CS, which means the alternate use of codes between sentences or clauses in which each clause or sentence belongs to a different variety. Romaine also identified intrasentential CS as the alternate use of codes within a single sentence or clause, and it includes mixing within word boundaries, known as code mixing. Although some scholars use the technical terms CS and code mixing in most contexts interchangeably (such as Muysken & Muysken, 2000; Bokamba, 1989), Romaine posited that code mixing is the intersentential type of CS, i.e., it is the use or the mixing of units of language such as vocabulary items or longer utterances from two different languages at the sentence or utterance boundary. By contrast, as has already been pointed out, Romaine stated that CS should occur within the same phrase or sentence for it to be termed CS.
Wardhaugh (2006) described two types of CS: situational and metaphorical. He asserted that situational CS takes place when the speakers change the language used depending on the situations in which they speak a particular language in one particular situation but switch to another language should the situation change without any change of topic. On the other hand, metaphorical CS occurs when speakers change the language they speak depending on topic. Wardhaugh clarified that some topics may be discussed by using any of the codes, “but the choice of code adds a distinct flavour to what is said about the topic” (p. 104).

In this context, it is important to clarify the difference between borrowing and CS. Borrowing is simply “when an item is taken over lock, stock and barrel from one variety into another” (Hudson, 1980, p. 59). This indicates that a lexical item is taken from one variety into another and is integrated into the native variety without the need to switch from L1 to L2. A borrowed item is also “assimilated in some degree” to the rules of the second language. Hudson points out “that the phenomenon of borrowing refers to the use of a word or a phrase that has been accepted in the native language, whereas CS could take place at the word level, phrase level, sentence level, or more” (p. 214). In this sense, the phenomenon of borrowing does not need bilingual speakers since monolinguals can apply this phenomenon too. Monaghan and Roberts (2019) state that a borrowed item such as a loan word or phrase sometimes completely supplants a previously existing native word, or it sometimes coexists with a native word with a similar meaning. In these two scenarios, the use of a loan word is not to be seen as a kind of CS at all because the loan word has become part and parcel of the language that has borrowed it and is not seen as a foreign word/phrase anymore.

Register can be defined as “set(s) of language items associated with discrete occupational or social groups. Surgeons, airline pilots, bank managers, sales clerks, jazz fans, and pimps employ different registers” (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 52). It is also defined as a “specialized lexicon that is used by persons in a certain profession or aficionados or fans of a certain sport or activity” (Myers-Scotton, 2006, p. 28). Biber and Finegan (1994) identified register as “a language variety viewed with respect to its context of use” (p. 4).

The phenomenon of CS has been investigated in various contexts across the Arab World in a variety of settings – in educational, social, and work/professional settings. For example, Alenezi and Kebble (2018) conducted a study of this phenomenon in the context of medical classroom discussions in universities in Saudi Arabia, and they found out that Saudi medical students “had a strong preference for using code-switching over a monolingual medium of instruction” because “code-switching was more desirable for course content comprehensibility” (p. 148).

Hamed et al. (2017) posited that Arabic speakers frequently code-switched during their daily conversations that were particularly centred on the theme of technology. Among the factors that contribute to this phenomenon are “globalization, urbanization, immigration and international businesses and communication” (p. 209).

Abdulhady and Al-Darraji (2019) examined CS among Libyan students of translation at Benghazi University. The researchers found out that students used English terms in their casual Arabic conversations mainly when they were unaware of the Arabic equivalents to those English
technical terms, and so to “overcome their translation inability” (p. 175). Interestingly, the researchers also found out that in their English conversations students sometimes code-switched to Arabic just to add ‘local colour’ to their speech.

At the local arena where the researchers come from, ample research has addressed the phenomenon of CS in Jordan at different levels. For example, Rabab’ah and Al-Yasin (2017) investigated CS in the conversations of Jordanian EFL teachers with their students in class. The researchers concluded that switching to L1, which was Arabic in that context, in the EFL classroom was quite common, and that the frequency and types of CS were contingent largely upon the students’ English proficiency. They found out that the lower the English proficiency of the students, the higher the frequency of CS. They posited that CS was often resorted to by the teachers to achieve pedagogical functions, such as wanting to be more intimate with the students and building rapport with them.

Hussein (1999) examined the purpose and attitude for the CS phenomenon among Jordanian university students. He found that students switch from one code to another for a multiplicity of reasons, such as language gap, which is the lack of equivalents in the Arabic language for the English words and phrases, the ease of using English to express scientific terms and concepts, and the familiarity with some formulaic English expressions like those used in greeting, apologies, complements, etc.

Hleihil (2001) investigated the motivations and attitudes towards the phenomenon of CS among Jordanian employees and customers in an American fast-food restaurant. For the purpose of this work, the researcher developed a three-section questionnaire and distributed it to 200 salespeople and customers of the American fast-food restaurants in some Jordanian cities. Spontaneous conversations between clients and employees and between employees themselves were also tape-recorded. The researcher found that respondents had strong motivations for CS, and the most salient of those motivations was the lack of equivalents in the Arabic language to the names of the American dishes. He also found that respondents differed in their attitude towards CS according to their age, gender, occupation, education and region.

Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) explored the language structure and sociolinguistic functions of CS between Arabic and English in mobile phone SMS among Jordanian university students. The results showed that students switch from Arabic to English for three main reasons: CS as a matter of prestige, using academic and technical terms to fill gaps in the language, and serving the function of euphemism.

To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, no previous studies have investigated the aviation register in Jordan. More specifically, the code-switching phenomenon among pilots is a topic that has not been investigated in the literature before, which makes the present study of special value and relevance to the field of sociolinguistics and to English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Methods

This research used the quantitative research method. Data were collected from the participants, and then all cases of CS in the elicited data were singled out and grouped in a table.
Statistics of frequency and percentages were calculated, and those statistics provided the launching pad for the discussions section of this research article.

**Participants and setting**

Eight male Jordanian pilots took part in the study. They were informed that their conversations were being recorded for research purposes, but they were not given any detailed information on what parts or particular features of their conversations the researchers were interested in. The data used in this study for the analysis of CS in the informal conversations of the participants were collected over the period of ten days in three informal meetings where the conversational exchanges were tape-recorded. The purpose of the meetings was to exchange friendly visits among colleagues who shared the same profession and worked for the same company. All the meetings took place in the home of one of the pilots in Amman, Jordan. Seven of the eight participants were married and one was single. The mother-tongue of all the pilots is the Jordanian Arabic vernacular, and evidently it is their everyday conversational variety. It differs from the formal Modern Standard Arabic variety in its vocabulary, syntactic structure and pronunciation. The ages of the participants ranged from 30 to 55. More specifically, their ages were 30, 35, 37, 38, 40, 45 and 55. Those pilots had all completed their academic studies at the Royal Jordanian Academy in Jordan. In order for them to possess a good level of English proficiency, pilots were required to pass an English proficiency test provided by the Civil Aviation Authority. However, the command of English for the pilots was different from one to another because each one of them attended a different school and lived in a more or less different social environment. The speakers in the tape-recordings chose their topics freely with no intervention from the researchers, who were not part of the conversation. The main topic of discussion was the promotion of one of the participants from a first officer rank to captain. This evolved into a discussion of the challenges in flying on which he might be tested during the process of promotion as well as the problems that he might face in the simulator while being examined.

**Instrument**

Three meetings on three different days were recorded on a recording gadget with the permission of the participants, so as to be played back for analysis. Each meeting lasted for approximately two hours. After collecting the data, the researchers listened several times to the recordings generated from the meetings, transcribed every single utterance in phonetic alphabet. The researchers also translated each utterance into English. All examples of CS that could be elicited from the data were collected and presented in a table. The table was used to provide a succinct statistical summary of the results, namely to elucidate the frequency and percentage of each case of CS. This statistical summary of the results was the basis from which the researchers set about their analysis of the functions of CS in their data as well as the types of code-switched expressions that could be found.
Findings
The data revealed that Jordanian pilots use CS of eight different types: technical terms and terminologies such as airline, autopilot, landing gear; technical acronyms and abbreviations such as CBT, JAR, LOFT; aviation titles and ranks such as captain, dispatcher, fleet manager; quotations and reported speech such as u-iḥna naẓli:n alli: "If you have anything report to me"; English numbers; names of companies places, documents and organizations; formulaic expressions such as thank you, hello, bye; and other miscellaneous words and phrases. The data also revealed that the highest seven occurrences of CS in the conversations of the participants were related to the aviation register. The ‘quotations and reported speech’ type of CS appears to be the only one in the collected data that can be classified as an example of intersentential switching, i.e., code mixing. The formulaic expressions, such as goodbye and hello, can be classified as examples of tag switching. All the other types of switching in the collected data can be categorized strictly as examples of CS. However, in this paper, as was the custom in Romaine, all three patterns will be referred to as examples, or variant types, of CS.

Discussion
Discussion Related to the First Question
Regarding the first question that investigates the types of CS among Jordanian pilots in the aviation register, the data revealed that Jordanian pilots use CS of eight different types:

Technical Terms and Terminologies
Pilots switch to the English technical terms extensively in their conversations. This is sometimes due to the fact that these terms have no Arabic equivalents. As explained by Hussein (1999), one important factor inciting CS is when certain language items are present in one language but lack equivalents in another language. This category forms the highest percentage in the findings since there are significantly large numbers of technical terms included. A case in point is the following set of examples: airline, approach, augmented (crew), autopilot, auto-throttle, cargo, check, checklist, cockpit, course, cruise, destination, engine, engine failure, escape route, flight level, flight plan, fuel, grounded, hangar, heading, hung start, landing gear, load sheet, local nights, manoeuvre, panel, and wind shear.

Below are some examples of these terms as used in their CS in their actual conversations:
- "lamma aṭṭa:nī wind shear usā:n māṣo crash ẓīmēl freeze la simulator." (When he gave me wind shear, he crashed then he froze the simulator.)
- "kunna bnišmal taxi willa huweh bīḥki māṣi tower." (We were taxiing when he called the tower.)
- "mā azджek roster rasmi: šah?" (You did not receive an official roster, right?)
- "aṭṭa:h wet start fakkaroh hung start." (He gave him wet start but he thought it hung start.)
- "ana fuṭ el flight plan demonstration." (I saw the flight plan demonstration.)
- "māṣu:l biddi ?aḍalni maintain nafs el flight level?" (Do I have to maintain the same flight level?)

Technical Acronyms and Abbreviations
Pilots switch for technical acronyms and abbreviations that fall within the scope of their knowledge. This may happen because of the convenience of using the English abbreviation/acronym in comparison to the full form, whether in English or in any other language. Linguistically, an abbreviation is related to the separate pronunciation of the initial letters of the constituent words (Cannon, 1989), such as CBT (Competency-based Training) and CRM (Crew Resource Management). An acronym, on the other hand, is pronounced as a single word (Cannon, 1989), such as IATA, JAR, JAV, LOFT, and they stand for (International Air Transport Association), (Joint Aviation Requirements), (Jordan Aviation), and (Line Oriented Flight Training) respectively. Below are some examples used in the Jordanian Arabic context:

- "abel mæ nišmal il LOFT bi simulator." (Before we do the LOFT in the simulator.)
- "min wèn bìdi ašraf ān ha:d el route escape iḍa miʃ mawżud la fi Boeing wala fi IATA?" (How can I know about the route escape procedure if it is unavailable neither in Boeing nor in IATA?)

Other abbreviations that have frequent presence are:
- APU (Auxiliary Power Unit), AMC (Acceptable Means of Compliance), ATC (Air Traffic Control), CBT (Competency-based Training), CMC (Crew Member Certificate), CMB (Climbing to), CRM (Crew Resource Management), GPS (Global Positioning System), FMS (Flight Management System), GPWS (Ground Proximity Warning Computer), ILS (Instrument Landing System), QRH (Quick Reference Handbook), RVSM (Reduce Vertical Separation Minimum), SOP (Standard Operating Procedure), and VOR (VHF Omni-directional Radio Range)

- "ʃabak el generator mæ aža maʃo el APU." (He connected the generator but the APU did not work.)
- "biddak itʃajjek il CRM." (You have to check the CRM.)
- "iḥna šinna limitations šala i ṭaija:rah mawżud bil OFM." (We have limitations for the aircraft in the OFM.)
- "ḥatta law næzel ILS ḥay fūruṣ el VFR." (Even if you are landing with ILS, these are the conditions of the VFR.)
- "bniʔdar niʃbek il autopilot ṭhatta lal GPWS." (We can connect the autopilot even in the GPWS.)

The above examples show that pilots refer to the aviation acronyms and abbreviations extensively with no need to clarify any single code since this kind of usage is an integral part of their practical life. In light of Wardhaugh’s (2006) explanation, it may be suggested that the extensive use of aviation abbreviations and acronyms by the pilots functions as an identity marker for this group who are united by the same ‘pursuits’. Also in line with Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008), it may be posited that the subjects code-switched here in order to fill gaps in the language since those abbreviations and acronyms did not exist in Arabic.

**Aviation Titles and Ranks**

The corpus of collected data shows that even though Arabic has equivalent terms to the English ones, the participants ignore them and insist on using the English ones. There are certain
Positions, titles and ranks that are used in the English aviation register, and Jordanian pilots seem very unlikely to use their Arabic equivalents. Such codes are: captain, crew, dispatcher, (first) officer, fleet manager, flight attendant, HOD (Head of the Department), load sheet master, supervisor, (training) instructor, (training) examiner, trainee.

- "nuṣ il instructor miʃ mawṣuːdi:n."  
  (Half of the instructors are unavailable.)
- "Ṣinna wæḥad min il trainee kɔiː x overconfident."  
  (One of our trainees is so overconfident.)
- "iḥna il officer ṣinna aʃ tār min captain ʃindhom."  
  (An officer in our company is more skilful than their captain.)

In the first two utterances, the speakers replaced the Arabic "mudarreb" and "mutadarreb" with their English equivalents "instructor" and "trainee" respectively. It is obvious that the layman would not do such switches since the Arabic equivalents are available and used as a matter of course. In the third utterance we expect that the words "officer" and "captain" would be replaced by the word "ṭaijjaːr" by an ordinary person in the Arabic discourse since most non-specialists are unaware of the difference between both ranks. While Abdulhady and Al-Darraji (2019) suggested that their subjects could have code-switched during their English conversations to Arabic to add ‘local colour’ to their speech, it may be suggested here that in the same vein the pilots could have code-switched to English in their Arabic conversations in order to add either a ‘professional colour’ or ‘more global colour’ to their speech.

Quotations and Reported Speech

Another common code-switching feature in the daily conversations of the participants in the study was the reporting of English words and phrases that were originally spoken in English although those participants could have translated them into Arabic. This quotation function is one of the six main functions of CS reported by Gumperz (1982). Perhaps, this code-switching saves the speaker the trouble of translation:

- "kunna ræh niʃmal crash, u-iḥna næzliːn alli "if you have anything report to me."
  (We were about to crash when we were descending. He said to me, "If you have anything, report to me.)
- "axadha minni u-alli "I am the captain, and I'll do whatever I want."
  (He took it from me and said, "I am the captain, and I'll do whatever I want.)
- "biḥkiːlo "you are stupid" uddæm il  crew."  
  (He said to him, "You are stupid!” in front of the crew.)

In the above excerpts, it can be noticed that quotations and reported speech can be expressed in two different syntactic structures: "inter-sentential", on the periphery of the utterance, such as in the first and second examples, or "intra-sentential", within the utterance, like in the third example.

English Numbers

Results show that pilots use English numbers extensively for two main reasons. First, they name aircraft using the number part of the name only without the need to mention the full model name of the aircraft. For example, they use seven three seven to refer to Boeing 737, triple seven for Boeing 777, seven six seven for Boeing 767, and three eighty for Airbus 380. In other
cases, they only mention the sub-number of the model name to refer to a certain aircraft. For instance, pilots use *four hundred* to refer to the Boeing 737-400. It is also noticeable that pilots feel satisfied by uttering the first two numbers to refer to the aircraft type:

- "*aṣṭi:nī il flight re-dispatch la seven six.*
  (Give me the flight re-dispatch for the seven six.)
- "*mafru:d ẓibna min il seven six u-min il three twenty wæhad.*
  (We should have had one from the seven six and one from the three twenty.)

In the above examples, the speakers refer to Boeing 767 by using the first two numbers *"seven six"* and to the Airbus 320 by using numbers without the need to mention the full name of make and model.

The second use of numbers in the pilots’ jargon occurs when talking about visibility, level, speed and time. Below are some examples:

- "*il visibility kænat one hundred.*
  (The visibility was one hundred.)
- "*jaʕnī fæt ʕ al hold maximum speed two hundred fifty.*
  (It means that he entered the hold with a maximum speed of two hundred fifty.)
- "*ana ʕa:le fifteen minute sector.*
  (I have a fifteen-minute sector.)

**Names of Companies, Places, Documents and Organizations**

In the aviation register, most proper names and a lot of common names are usually referred to in English. Examples are: *Air Baltic, Algeria, Cairo, Casablanca, Civil Aviation, Cubana Airlines, Emirate Airlines, Jeppesen, Jordan Aviation, Morocco, operation manual,* and *Tripoli.* This type of CS could not be due to language gap as explained by Hussein (1999) or Hleihil (2001) because those names did of course have Arabic equivalents. But rather, this is probably because in their job the pilots communicate in a motley environment, with people from various linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. For example, the speaker in the following utterance switched to the English word *"Tripoli"* instead of its Arabic equivalent *"ṭara:blus"* which is used by the majority of Arab speakers:

- "bas tismaʕ fi: rotation ʕala Tripoli bitxa:f.*
  (You feel afraid when you hear that there is a rotation to Tripoli.)

The same case is for *"Emirates Airlines"* which is usually replaced by *"al-imarætijjah liṭajara:n"* by other native speakers of Arabic.

- "biddu jiṭabaq il requirements tæ3et Emirates Airlines.*
  (He wants to apply the requirements of Emirates Airlines.)

Cairo is also replaced by the Arabic equivalent *"alqa:hirah"

"kæn maṣæna: bi Cairo"

(He was with us in Cairo.)

**Formulaic Expressions**

English expressions of thanks, greetings and apologies were also palpably present in the discourse. Such expressions are also used by the majority of Jordanian people whether they
Possess good English proficiency or not. Code-switching to such expressions has become so common amongst Jordanians that for some it is more of a norm than the exception. This may be referred to as a type of tag switching that was explained by Romaine (1995) who used Poplack’s (1980) illustration of the different kinds of CS. Below are examples from the data:

- "Thank you habi:bi."
  (Thank you, dear.)
- "Hello jæ man."
  (Hello, man.)
- "jalla bye habi:bi."
  (Goodbye, my dear.)
- "sorry habi:bi."
  (Sorry, my dear.)

Miscellaneous Words and Phrases

In analysing the data, some other terms that make pilots switch from Arabic to English can be indicative of a high level of proficiency in the English language. These terms have their Arabic equivalents and are usually used by Jordanians in their Arabic versions. Nevertheless, it can be noticed that pilots use such terms frequently either to show a high level of proficiency in English or because they are used to them:

- "hasab il bids tæset il ūarikeh."
  (It depends on the bids of the company.)
- "iṭaijjara:t min ḍimn il assets tæset il ūarikeh."
  (Aircraft are considered within the assets of the company.)
- "talabet unpaid leave bas mæ awṣalha."
  (I asked for unpaid leave in order not to fly there.)
- "bidhom fine, gharemeh liʔinw w-ṣilna bakkiri:r."
  (They asked for a fine because we arrived early.)

In the last example, the word fine is followed by its Arabic equivalent gharemeh, and this may be used in order to avoid misunderstanding since "fine" has other meanings too. This is a clear example of reiteration. The concept of reiteration as explained by Sampson (2011) was discussed earlier in the literature review section of this paper.

It should be stated here that although some of the CS functions discussed by Gumperz (1982), such as reiteration and quotation, were evidently present in a number of examples in the data, other CS functions in Gumperz, such as interjection and message qualification, could not be detected anywhere in the collected data of this study. The interjection function was not present because as subjects were conversing in their L1 all the time, with occasional cases of intrasentential CS, and they only used L1 interjections. The message qualification function was not present most probably because this function requires CS involving the use of longer utterances such as whole sentences or several sentences as explained by Gumperz; in our data, most CS, apart from the quotations, involved the use of individual vocabulary items, abbreviations and acronyms, and relatively short formulaic expressions.
Discussion Related to the Second Question

Regarding the most frequent words and expressions that pilots use when they code-switch from Arabic to English, it has been noticed that the highest seven occurrences are related to the aviation register. In Wardhaugh’s (2006) terminology, it seems that in the informal conversations of the subjects of this study, the CS occurrences that could be recorded were almost exclusively of the metaphorical type, with very few instances of situational CS. That is because whenever the subjects’ conversations veered into topics unrelated to their profession as pilots, CS almost disappeared. This is naturally not a surprising result since people who share the same profession usually talk about mutual interests in their domain. However, these terms are subject to change due to the fact that the frequency of the used term will vary in accordance with the main topic of the conversation. Appendix A shows the most frequent terms and expressions with frequencies ranging from 21 to five along with their percentages of use. Terms with a less-than-five frequency are not listed.

Most of the above-mentioned expressions have their Arabic equivalents such as "engine", "training", "speed" and "idea". Nevertheless, pilots do not seem to be willing to use the Arabic equivalent. Words that are especially used as terms peculiar to the aviation register are most likely to be used in English only. Examples from Appendix A are: "simulator", "captain", "autopilot", "approach" and "operation". The last type of terms in the aviation register refers to those which do not have Arabic equivalents and are only used in their English version, e.g., "auto throttle" and "re-dispatch".

Limitations of the Study

This study is based on data collected from a small sample of eight Jordanian pilots who were gathering at the house of one of their friends in casual informal settings which extended over three sessions. The data collection process took ten hours of recording. Moreover, the compiled data were restricted to the topics that had been raised and discussed during the three meetings. Thus, these topics are subject to change according to the ambient circumstances of the subjects. Hence, the frequencies in the results are also subject to change.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted to investigate an under-researched area of interest, CS involving the aviation register from Arabic to English among Jordanian pilots in their informal daily conversations. This study aimed to explore the types/functions of CS in the aviation register as recorded in a sample of three informal conversations by eight Jordanian pilots who are non-native speakers of English. It also meant to show the most frequent English terms and expressions used in the pilots’ informal discourse in Arabic.

Regarding the functions of CS, the analysis showed that pilots code-switch in eight major conversational types, namely: technical terms and terminologies; technical acronyms and abbreviations; aviation titles and ranks; quotations and reported speech; English numbers; names of companies, places, documents and organizations; formulaic expressions; other miscellaneous terms and phrases. The results showed extensive CS to English in the Arabic discourse of the participants, which means that pilots inject words, phrases and whole sentences from English into their spoken Arabic.
By examining the frequency of the English terms and expressions, it was discovered that technical terms, technical abbreviations, and terms that are related to the aviation register in general have the highest frequencies and that they are used more often than other words from the Jordanian Arabic vernacular.

In general, Arabic is still used as the primary means of discourse for communicative purposes by Jordanian pilots whose native language is Arabic; English is used as a facilitator, and sometimes the lack of competence in the mother-tongue vernacular plays a role. English also appears to be a main linguistic resource that pilots are used to when they communicate within their register since it is the main language of the aeronautics science. It is also known that being a pilot is a prestigious profession; thus, people involved tend to use English terms extensively since good knowledge of English is considered something of a prestigious status symbol.

Acknowledgment
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References


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**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

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**Frequencies of the most used terms and expressions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
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ISSN: 2229-9327
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>fuel</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>captain</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>alternate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>minimum</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>training</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>yes/no</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>exactly</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(first) officer</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>go around</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>panel</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>destination</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>(re-)dispatch</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>35</td>
<td>take off</td>
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<td>unpaid leave</td>
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<td>cost</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>idea</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>sector</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>syllabus</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>taxi</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>49</td>
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Appendix B

Phonetic Symbols of Jordanian Arabic

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>ب</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>ت</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Θ</td>
<td>ث</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʒ</td>
<td>ج</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ħ</td>
<td>ح</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>خ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>د</td>
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<tr>
<td>Đ</td>
<td>ذ</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>ر</td>
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<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>ز</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>س</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>ش</td>
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<td>š</td>
<td>ص</td>
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<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>ض</td>
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<td>t</td>
<td>ط</td>
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<td>Đ</td>
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<td>gh</td>
<td>غ</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>ف</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>ق</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>ك</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ɡ                | (dialectical sound as in “google”)
| L                 | ل                 |
| M                 | م                 |
| N                 | ن                 |
| H                 | ه                 |
| W                 | و                 |
| J                 | ي                 |

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<td>i,e</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>u,o</td>
<td>ضمة</td>
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<td>a</td>
<td>فتحة</td>
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<td>ا(لا)</td>
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<td>æ</td>
<td>ا(هل)</td>
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<tr>
<td>e:</td>
<td>ي(ه)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i:</td>
<td>ي(ون)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u:</td>
<td>و(رو)</td>
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<tr>
<td>o:</td>
<td>و(موت)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diphthongs</th>
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<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>و(ورد)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>ط(اره)</td>
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</table>
Existing EFL Pedagogies in Thai Higher Education: Views from Thai University Lecturers

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Abstract
Since English is extensively used among linguacultural users to access life opportunities, it has become a requisite foreign language in the Thai educational system. To prepare Thai learners for this new changing role of English and reduce English Language Teaching dependency on the native English variety, this study aimed to explore English lecturers' voices in Thai universities on existing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogies at the Thai tertiary level with the research question: how do English lecturers in Thai universities perceive EFL in Thai universities? Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 25 Thai EFL university lecturers selected from ten different universities in Thailand and analyzed using content analysis. The finding reveals that EFL-oriented pedagogy plays a dominant role in English language teaching (ELT) education in Thai classrooms, illustrating three main salient themes from the study: (1) EFL pedagogies; (2) EFL materials; and (3) EFL curriculums. The result shows that the pedagogy is less responsive in the changing roles of English use and its widespread worldwide, especially among diverse linguacultural interlocutors. Hence, English university lecturers should reconsider, adjust, and made more practical glocal changes in English language teaching for the purpose of language teaching, language planning and predicting language change.

Keywords: Cultural awareness, curricula content, EFL pedagogies, intercultural citizenship, Thai Higher Education

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Introduction

Amid globalization, English will remain significant as a pedagogical key language in Southeast Asian countries. Thailand is an expanding-circle country or ‘periphery-English country’ where English is utilized as a common language among Non-Native English Speakers (NNES) (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020; Baker, 2016; Kirkpatrick, 2014). Since English is extensively used to access life opportunities: careers, businesses, tourism, technology, and knowledge, English has become a requisite foreign language in the Thai educational system and is considered as a compulsory course in primary, secondary, and tertiary curriculums (Kiely, 2014). According to Kitjaroonchai (2012), the Thai government is committed to strengthening the English skills in Thailand to grant its citizens a harmonious living in the 21st century and the globalization era. Although the commitment and sense of direction may seem like good news, the course of action is yet to be questioned. When examining ELT in the Thai context, the employed pedagogies are exceedingly conventional. Most ELT solutions remain narrow. They encourage ELT learners to follow the native English speaker (NES) paths (Jindapitak & Teo, 2012; Methitham 2009). Most teaching approaches in Thailand, e.g., audio-lingua, functional-communicative, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Methitham, 2009), revolve around western-based theories and NES pedagogical materials. This indicates that most of the solutions are standardized, produced, and approved by western institutions for the NNES to follow. Consequently, many policymakers, educators, and local teachers in Thailand agree on the teaching approaches that iconize NES. Hence, many English teaching conferences, training programs, and materials focus on the best strategies for learners to acquire that ‘standard English.’ Nevertheless, preparing English language learners for today’s English diversity requires more responsive pedagogies than conventional English as a foreign language framework (EFL) and English nativeness idealization. In this globalized world, as Jindapitak (2019) and Tantiniranat (2020) suggested, English has become a medium for intercultural communication, and most English dialogues take place outside of the native English contexts, involving interlocutors with linguacultural diversity raised to be familiar with different English varieties. Therefore, narrowing English language education to a limited number of mainstream English varieties tends to drive impractical results.

Since English is a global language entitled to the global ownership status for being widely learned and utilized by diverse ethnicities with different mother tongues and cultures (Jenkins, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2015, 2018), it is not surprising that multiple varieties emerge and exist across geographic territories as a communication solution for multilingual and multicultural environments (Akkakoson, 2019; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2019). It is crucial for educators in the ELT industry to recognize and understand the reality of this progression. Their ELT frameworks need to be reconceptualized, and their goals need to be reprioritized. Adherence to standard English, such as British English or American English, should no longer be the primary teaching focus. Approaches that address communication success in cross-cultural settings and the new linguistic landscape should receive prioritized attention (Jenkins, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2015). The transformed and diversified sociolinguistic landscape of English makes the language less attached to specific English varieties or ethnic groups such as British and American (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Consequently, the language’s functions and scopes rapidly expand beyond geographical, social, and ethnic boundaries.
From past to present, the status of English has drastically shifted. Being so diverse, today’s English users and learners began to realize that there are more nationally and internationally accepted English varieties other than the mainstream ones, e.g., British and American Englishes. There is a dire need to prepare learners for the new ELT by addressing the changing roles of English and reducing ELT knowledge gaps in Thailand currently causing dependency to native English, practicality mismatches, and negligence of modern linguistic landscapes. To contribute in bridging this research gap, this study therefore attempted to answer three research questions: how do English lecturers in Thai universities perceive EFL (1) pedagogies, (2) materials, and (3) curriculums? Based on these questions, it is clear that this study aimed to explore English lecturers' voices in Thai universities on existing EFL pedagogies at the Thai tertiary level.

Literature Review

**English Language Teaching Ideology in Thailand**

English education in Thailand has been shaped by policies and curriculums that, in most cases, are not locally generated. They are designed by the Office of Basic Education for the primary and secondary levels; and the Office of Higher Education for the tertiary level (Boonsuk, 2016). These institutions have the sovereign authority to mandate and control how education in Thailand flows. In contrast, teachers have minimal control over the educational designs despite the fact that they have the intelligence on what works best contextually and culturally, for the target learners. In addition to the limited control in policymaking and planning, all official mandates must be undeniably carried out, meaning that, in Thailand, English teachers have the obligations to foster native English proficiency using Britishized or Americanized ELT approaches and pedagogies (Prabjandee, 2020; Rajprasit & Marlina, 2019) developed by native English scholars according to what they perceived universally appropriate (D’Angelo, 2012; Jindapitak, 2019; Methitham, 2011).

With these unrealistic requirements as stated above, ELT practitioners in Thailand are left with little space to modify their curriculums based on what could have been more effective for their students’ English language learning. Consequently, as time goes by and the world continues to evolve, ELT in Thailand remains highly traditional with EFL pedagogical dominance, this influence pressures Thai students to work hard to speak like a native English speaker using native linguistic conventions. Therefore, British English and American English remain the only approved ELT models in Thai and many other ELT markets (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Jindapitak & Boonsuk, 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2015, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019). The problem is that this traditional EFL teaching approach relies heavily on NES norms which cultivates Thai learners with a set of attitudes towards English language, i.e., NES’s standard English varieties and Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) are highly valued, efficient, widely accepted, correct, ideal, and professional; whereas NNES’s non-standard English and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) are less appreciated, inefficient, socially flawed, incorrect, impractical, and unprofessional (Boonsuk & Fang, 2020; Jindapitak & Teo, 2012). The approval of NEST and disapproval of NNEST in English language education is not a new phenomenon in Thailand. The social phenomenon signifies some severe misconceptions about NESTs and NNEST. To this notion, native English speakerism and linguistic imperialism are racist ideologies that should no longer be supported. Therefore, the practices and beliefs are inappropriate and should be reconceptualized.
English Language Teaching Practices in Thai Classrooms

As previously noted, conservative ideologies were the reason behind the dominance of EFL ELT models in Thailand. They tend to discriminate against other “non-standard” English varieties. They exclusively favor the use of “standard” British English and American English in education. Adhering to native linguistic conventions is recognized as correct English usage. In contrast, NESTs are a must and the only models with gold standards in producing acceptable English linguistic outputs. Since these ideologies are established in the Thai society, educators, learners, and parents involved in expanding-circle ELT markets, including Thailand, still perceive that EFL is the safest approach to master English (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020; Galloway & Rose, 2018; Ren, 2014; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Seidlhofer, 2011).

However, it is noteworthy to point out that English pedagogies developed by NES are poorly contextualized since they usually pay attention to western cultural and social contexts with little or no emphasis on that of the learners. Using western concepts as English teaching standards or models in different learning contexts, e.g., Thailand with significantly different socio-cultural conditions will require learners to work hard in familiarizing themselves with alien conceptions. Nevertheless, while learning the concepts will not be helpful in their everyday use full of diverse English users from different circles using various varieties of world Englishes, nonetheless, adopting very western English approaches in Thailand’s language education continues to gain public approval. As a result, Thailand’s ELT courses and textbooks are in American English or British English (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020; Jindapitak & Boonsuk, 2018). Contents in these textbooks are heavily filled with native English theories, linguistics, cultures, and ethnic biases. These curricular requirements reflected that Thailand promotes native English idealization, as evidence could be found in curriculums, textbooks, contents, and pictures. These westernized materials introduce serious discrimination to global Englishes as they recognize traits of NES and devalue NNES conventions. This marginality arose from pedagogical biases, and it prioritizes “everything associated with the colonial Self and marginalizes everything associated with the subaltern Other. In the neocolonial present, as in the colonial past, methods are used to establish native-Self as superior and the non-native Other as inferior” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 541). The notion reflects that Thai ELT still prefers Inner-circle contents, styles, and materials, e.g., from the UK and the USA. Unfortunately, this pro-native practice reflects a significant level of educational negligence and failures to promote global citizenship amid English pluricentricity.

Learners, as global citizens, need more responsive ELT strategies to familiarize them with the English-speaking life filled with interlocutors of diverse mother tongues and cultures. A professor of a prominent university in Thailand stated in Boonyavatana (1996) that: "Take Thailand as a case study ... we are dealing with a new demand of cross-cultural communication between Thai and the English speaking people of different cultures, most of them are not even native speakers of English" (p. 6).

To address the changed English status quo, ELT should be reconceptualized with a new objective that addresses language pluricentricity and avoids idealization of NES to ensure that learners are equipped with desirable competencies to handle the current diversity and fluidity of English communication. On this note, Modiano (2009, p. 59) elaborated that "an understanding of the diversity of English, for production as well as for comprehension, makes one a better
communicator". This assertion is in line with Dewey (2012, p. 163) suggesting that educational practitioners should utilize the following objectives to explain, learn to accept, and incorporate the concept of language diversity:

1) investigate and highlight the particular environment and socio-cultural context in which English(es) will be used;
2) increase exposure to the diverse ways in which English is used globally; presenting alternative variants as appropriate whenever highlighting linguistic form;
3) engage in critical classroom discussion about the globalization and growing diversity of English;
4) spend proportionately less time on ENL forms, especially if these are not widely used in other varieties; and thus choose not to penalize non-native led innovative forms that are intelligible and;
5) focus (more) on communicative strategies.

This means that English should be learned with cultural and contextual flexibilities where NES norms could be used as references, not as any ELT goals. By so doing, ELT classrooms could potentially be a more powerful route towards English acquisition as learners are more equipped to communicate with linguistic conventions that exist in multilingual and multicultural contexts (Baker, 2015, 2016; Byram, Golubeva, Han & Wagner, 2017).

Methods
Participants
The participants in this qualitative study were 25 Thai EFL university lecturers purposively selected from ten different universities in Thailand. They were chosen based on their suitability in teaching English language and GEs-oriented courses in addition to the fact that they lecture in some of the most prestigious universities within Thailand. The 25 lecturers consisted of five participants from each university who were purposively selected on the basis of their interest in participating in the study from among the many lecturers that were contacted to take part in the research. To gain the information needed to address the research objectives and questions appropriately, certain criteria were considered for participant selection. They should (i) have been teaching or taught GEs courses or related ones like English as an International Language, English Language and Culture, Sociolinguistics, Intercultural Communication; (ii) have some background experience and knowledge in learning, teaching, and using English with different groups of students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Without such experience, they might have no idea on how to answer the interview questions.

Research Instrument
This study employed a semi-structured individual interview to elicit qualitative data from the participants on their perception towards different aspects of GEs teaching and practices in universities in Thailand with regards to (1) EFL pedagogies; (2) EFL materials; and (3) EFL curriculums. The choice of an interview is because an interview can access in-depth information on the participants’ attitudes, as well as understand their personal views in ways only possible by this tool as opposed to others like surveys or observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The interview questions were adopted from different studies conducted on Global Englishes awareness in different EFL and ESL contexts (Galloway & Rose, 2015, 2018; Rose & Galloway,
2019; Jenkins, 2015) and adapted in the current study to suit the context of the research (see Appendix A). By utilizing this instrument, it will provide the participants with an opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts on the research phenomenon.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The 25 Thai EFL university lecturers from each university were contacted and their interviews were scheduled individually through either email, phone calls, or face to face. Before the interview was conducted, each lecturer was provided with a brief overview of the goal of the interview and its procedures, and the researchers asked the interviewees for permission to audio record the sessions so that these logs could later be transcribed as a preventive measure against possible discrepancies in data analysis. To ensure that the interview session was a success, English was employed as the core interview language given the lecturers have all been teaching in English. During the interview sessions, the participants were free to express their ideas to avoid the researchers’ interferences for an authentic data collection. To establish a sense of familiarity between the researcher and the participants, each interview began with general questions and then moved onto more specific ones. Once the interviews were over, the researchers thoroughly transcribed the interview logs. Subsequently, all the transcriptions were re-examined line by line to verify their completeness and consistencies with the audio logs. Once deemed accurate, the transcripts were handed to every participant for the final validations before the analysis could commence.

The researchers employed qualitative content analysis to process the data. Generally, the qualitative content analysis examines the meanings in particular contexts and attempts to provide core patterns and reliable conclusions (Patton, 2002). It is one of the research tools used to find the patterns of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Dörnyei (2007) presented two broad phases of content analysis:

1. taking each person's response in turn and marking in them any distinct content elements, substantive statements, or key points;
2. based on the ideas and concepts highlighted in the texts, forming broader categories to describe the content of the response in a way that allows for comparison with other responses (p. 117).

Thus, the content analysis procedures presented by Dörnyei were adopted in this study to analyze the qualitative data within this study. Dörnyei divides content analysis procedures into four different steps which were also implemented in the current study, namely, transcribing the data, pre-coding and coding, growing ideas-memos, vignettes, profiles, and other forms of data display, and interpreting the data and drawing conclusions.

Since the main focus of a qualitative analysis is on the content of the respondents’ answers, not the manner in which they gave the information, any prosodic features that occurred in the interviews were not transcribed. Thus, after each participant cross-checked the transcript, the researchers began to identify emerging themes or patterns relevant to the research by reading throughout the transcriptions from beginning to end several times. The emerging themes were sorted and grouped in separate sets for consistency so that once the coding was completed, the thematic results would reveal interrelations. As a result, some themes were structured into subthemes, while others were discarded for being irrelevant to the study.
Findings

This section presents key findings from the interviews of the 25 Thai EFL university lecturers who were the participants for the study. The excerpts are presented verbatim from the transcription and used here as examples that represent salient attitudes of the participants in the study. The results illustrated three main significant themes on the participants’ perception towards GEs in ELT in Thai university classrooms: (1) EFL pedagogies; (2) EFL materials; and (3) EFL curriculums. The details of each theme are discussed hereafter.

EFL Pedagogies

As elaborated in Excerpts 1-4, the native speaker ideology that projects inner circle speakers as the best teaching models still monopolizes the Thai ELT university context. In other words, the English language of NESTs is considered as good, correct, standard, beautiful, natural, and authentic, and this idea that they hold is greatly influenced by the native ELT ideologies in Thailand.

Excerpt 1

I think that the ELT education pedagogy in Thailand is heavily western-oriented. The reason for this, in my opinion, is because many of the ELT educational stakeholders in Thailand still perceive that effective ELT and learning in Thailand is ineffective without the native English speakers’ influence. Our stakeholders still think that only native Standard English pedagogy is appropriate, and thus, such western pedagogical models are intentionally forced into Thai ELT pedagogy.

Excerpt 2

From my English language learning and teaching experience here in Thailand, I can say that our English language education is heavily embedded in native norms and cultural contents that are distant from what we know and encounter on a daily basis here in Thailand. This kind of pedagogy makes it difficult for us to have a Global Englishes awareness and experience quickly.

Excerpt 3

Thailand is an EFL context in the Expanding circle where English is used as a lingua franca given the changing global roles of English as an international language. With this reality, one would expect an integrated pedagogy that incorporates inner circle teaching models with ELF approaches to locally and globally prepare students for effective communication. However, our Thai pedagogy projects more of the inner circle teaching methods as the best and most suitable for an EFL context like Thailand. These native-speaking models have indeed monopolized the Thai ELT market.

Excerpt 4

If we have ELT pedagogies that actually prepare our learners for real-life communications and interactions, then, we can say that our learners will be able to use different English varieties and be more appreciative of variations in Englishes and not see them as bad English. But the fact that the manner in which English is taught or we are expected by policy and educational stakeholders in Thailand to teach English based on native countries’ pedagogies makes this Global Englishes awareness a far-fetched reality for our learners.
EFL Materials

It is undeniable that teaching and learning materials are still important in English language teaching/learning, especially in EFL environments such as Thailand, where English is employed as a lingua franca. Teaching/learning materials can guide learners through L1 simulations and can help them (learners) to understand what is expected of them during interactions. However, overused exemplifications of scenarios from L1 contexts seem to have taken up most of the language learning opportunities in Thai EFL material contents. From this view, it is evident that implemented contents in English training programs, conferences, and classroom materials in Thailand are heavily western-oriented (see Excerpts five and six).

Excerpt 5

I believe that we mainly use teaching and learning materials to teach our students from western producers like Pearson and others because there’s still the assumption that this group of producers publishes materials of authentic language use for anyone wanting to learn ‘good English’.

Excerpt 6

English language materials from publishers like Macmillan and Cambridge in itself speaks of authentic English usage. This is the idea that most Thai educational stakeholders still have English teaching and learning materials in Thailand. While this may be good, however, given the shifted roles of English nowadays, using only materials from such western publishers may mean that our Educational stakeholders hold a strong belief in these producers as the place where good English can be learned regardless of the English learning background of the learners which does not realistically reflect the Global roles of English.

While learning English using western English materials may not necessarily be a bad idea, incorporating materials of local ELT publishers and contents, colors and descriptions may even be more apt and effective to the students’ ELT and learning. In this way, the learners can compare and contrast the western cultural contents in the materials with that of their local context to ensure that the possible diversity is explored. To this point, some participants in this study share a similar view as seen in Excerpts seven and eight.

Excerpt 7

We can learn about the cultures of others from our English language teaching and learning materials and compare them with ours to make the most of our learning experiences if the English language pedagogies in Thailand recognize this Global role of English reality.

Excerpt 8

We can explore interesting cultural diversity if English teaching and learning materials contain cultural contents from different contexts. This will give us a broader and global perspective on what we learn and how we can engage in real-life communication with people from different parts of the world.

Furthermore, some informants suggested that most EFL pedagogies in Thailand are based on L1 English content materials. These claims seem authentic because most of the
teaching/learning materials approved by the Ministry of Education for primary, secondary, and tertiary education from international publishers tend to primarily have western depictions. Thai rural learners are forced to learn Christmas, snow, Big Ben, Cinco de Mayo, Halloween, apple pie, raspberry sauce, lasagna, hamburgers, fish and chips, French fries, pizzas, Bond Street, Corn Maze, Niagara Falls, autumn, snow, ice skating, and skiing (see Excerpts nine and 10).

Excerpt 9
As one might imagine, this weird list of things from the west is not entirely relevant to our context and our learners, nor are they easily comprehensible. What good does this kind of education do when the relevance and practicality factors are missing?

Excerpt 10
Our pedagogy encourages us to pile up a list of vocabularies and sets of dialogues that are not relevant to the real-life situations that our Thai learners will face where the vast majorities of them are non-L1 English speakers. Effective learning occurs when a learner can connect new exposures to past experiences.

EFL Curriculums
Most of the participants in this study show a preference for the adoption and implementation of this ELF approach in designing Thai English language curriculums as an alternative measure to achieve practical learning (see Excerpts 11 to 13).

Excerpt 11
It should be remembered that Thailand is a context where English is employed as a lingua franca with English language learners and users from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it will be most useful if the way that our curriculums are designed takes this sociolinguistic reality into consideration and adopt an ELF approach curriculum instead.

Excerpt 12
An English as a lingua franca approach seems to be a suitable framework to consider in addition to traditional western theories, of course, when curriculums are designed for Thai learners. In this way, we can be sure that our curriculums really prepare our Thai learners for real-world global English usage.

Excerpt 13
If our Thai English language curriculums would focus on teaching materials from both our local Thai context and that of the globe, then, learning English for Thai students would be most effective, relevant, and practical.
Designing an English language curriculum for EFL learning/teaching with an emphasis on the L1 norms does not reflect the current intercultural challenges of the global use of English. It used to be said that English is the important language for those who wish to communicate with westerners. However, the paradigms have shifted. English is now a global lingua franca serving greater purposes. Most of the participants seem to agree with this changing reality of the English language and calls for a paradigm shift in how EFL curriculums are designed (see Excerpts 11 and 13).
Discussion

The three primary findings contributed by the participants' are discussed in this section, including EFL instructions, instructional materials, and curriculums in Thailand. The first finding serves as a strong indication that Standard British and American English varieties have long been accepted and promoted as the only (if not the most important) pedagogical models for ELT in Thailand that are internationally acceptable (Bolton, 2012; Jindapitak & Teo, 2012). However, English language pedagogies in Thailand should not neglect how diverse the English language has globally become, especially when it is used by people of different ASEAN nations. Contrarily, the Thai educational system is heavily western-oriented (see Excerpts one to four). It is therefore imperative for educators to raise this intercultural Global Englishes awareness in their pedagogical implementation policies in Thai Higher education so that the students who learn English can be more of global citizens instead of being limited or exposed to only western pedagogies.

If one would attempt to look at the English learning condition closely and unbiasedly, one should find that most story narrations in these contents largely focus on imaginative plots that take place somewhere far beyond imagining (Galloway & Rose, 2015, 2018; Fang, 2016; Fang & Ren, 2018; Ren, 2014; Rose & Galloway, 2019). It becomes time-consuming for many local EFL learners to digest because the contents do not focus on what most local learners need to know when they go out and speak English. In fact, these learning experiences can give local learners a hard time when it comes to transitioning and relating the westernized English lessons that they learned with the local situations that require them to realistically use English varieties in communication. Presently, English serves as a medium of communication among multilingual who study English as an additional language in ASEAN (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Kirkpatrick, 2012; 2014; Rose & Galloway, 2019). This phenomenon sheds new light on whether to teach and use English based on native contents (British or American English) or the contextual and environmental contents of the learners (e.g., where they live, how they use English in their societies, and with whom they mainly communicate). The goals, curricula, teaching contents and instructional and training materials of ELT may not necessarily be exclusively based on the EFL principle which regards inner circles varieties of English (British or American English) as the golden rule but more suitable English language pedagogies could be invented and integrated for these ELF learners and users so that the teaching reflects ELF, real-world utilization, and new linguistic landscapes (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019).

Concerning available EFL instructional materials in Thailand, most of the employed materials and learning supplements remain restricted to a limited number of producers such as Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Macmillan, Cambridge, Oxford, or Longman (Methitham, 2009) simply because national and local ELT practitioners trust that American and British institutions are the best place for everyone regardless of the English learning backgrounds, to learn English. Using both local and western English materials to teach English in Thailand will ensure that Thai learners have the opportunity to come up with flexible and natural ways of communicating with diverse interlocutors from varied linguacultural backgrounds. Such reflection can enhance the practicality of English in contextualized situations. Unfortunately, most English language practitioners in Thailand neglect to foster this second element in institutionalizing English learning in the university classrooms, unknowingly dragging learners to the monoculture edge and crippling their linguistic potential as quality 21st-century citizens.
On this note, Mauranen (2012) stated that EFL materials used in Thailand employ elements that are dissociative with local reality. The primary demonstration contains Inner-Circle stories with vague connections with the experiences of learners from other Circles. In addition, most lessons are biased. They do not usually mention the negative sides of the western world. Furthermore, many contents, both interactive and non-interactive, seem to unknowingly promote racial segregation by using more Caucasian characters in the stories. Since Thailand dominantly uses mainstream English materials, some learners and practitioners may be misled by false values hidden within them.

Furthermore, as described in Excerpts 9 and 10, the inconsistency between learners’ background knowledge and contents of the teaching/learning materials could lead to several drawbacks, such as motivation. When tasked, many learners were found unable to produce conversation dialogues independently even though they had recently learned how to. This could be because the ‘how’ did not make much sense as everything sounded strange and unfamiliar. Unknown learning contents and example discourses lack personal touches. Hence, educational contents that are too broad and distant can deteriorate learning motivation. Instead of being supportive, they eventually give learners a difficult time learning a language.

Suffices here to mention that most English materials in Thailand implemented at any educational level and produced by Thai or L1 English speakers are not very practical nor responsive to the current ELT challenges in Thailand. Realistically, it is almost impossible that English learners in Thailand will only be using English to communicate with Inner-Circle individuals. Contrarily, there is a fair likelihood that they will encounter non-L1 interlocutors in many occasions whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds vary extensively (Jenkins, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2014). To enhance learners’ self-understanding through English, prepare them for intercultural exposures, and train them to become effective cross-cultural communicators, EFL materials should be composed of a blend between global and local materials (i.e., glocal) (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Monocultural pedagogies create unnecessary learning restrictions which will only do more harm than good when realizing that learners will eventually be using English in multicultural encounters (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

One might not have realized that on many occasions, English conversations take place between interlocutors whose mother tongue is not English (Jenkins, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019). For instance, a group of Indonesian tourists could be asking a Thai hotel receptionist in English for directions whereas a Thai businessperson could be negotiating a trade deal with a Japanese counterpart using English. Many discussions such as these require English knowledge of local and contextual matters. More importantly, when more countries start adopting English, more English varieties emerge. That is why it is justifiable to reconsider not only to use westernized and monoculture ELT materials but also local materials. In ELF environments, English has become more dynamic and adaptive in its constant use. It is being adjusted to suit communicative circumstances (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). Having been extensively altered to serve diverse social purposes, an ELF study reported that ELF involves ‘multiculturalism, multilingualism, polymodels, and pluricentrism’ which contrasts traditional ideologies where English is only about “monoculturalism, monolingualism, monomodels, and monocentrism” (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 134).
Regarding EFL curriculums in Thailand, which is the third primary finding contributed by the participants, Thai English classes are still lacking behind in terms of preparing learners to use English in today’s multdialectal and multilingual world (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020; Boonsuk et al., 2021; Methitham, 2009). Therefore, dealing with this situation may involve the implementation of the conceptual and operational frameworks of ELF; how ELF curriculum can be designed and taught within Thai education. Amongst several studies of what is the most applicable local and global approach for ELT classroom context, a true reflection of the reality of ELT goal and curriculum in EFL contexts, is Kirkpatrick (2012, p. 40) ‘Lingua Franca Approach’ where he advocated for four principles:

1) The goal of the approach is not for learners to acquire native speaker proficiency and to sound like native speakers, but to enable them to use English successfully in lingua franca contexts; they will naturally sound like multilinguals.
2) The content of the curriculum needs to include topics of regional and local cultures that are relevant for lingua franca users in these contexts.
3) The curriculum must be designed to allow students to be able to engage critically on discussions about their own cultures and cultural values and interest in English.
4) The curriculum needs to include listening materials that familiarize students with the speech styles and pronunciation of their fellow multilinguals.

A key discussion here is integrating local and global (glocal) contents in designing ELT curriculums in Thailand, to prepare the learners for the glocal world. Put differently, ELF goals and curriculum should be applied to Thai EFL classroom. It is no doubt that ELF is different from NES model, therefore, teaching English through ELF’s framework will become even more appropriate and practical in Thailand (see Excerpts 11 and 13). Kirkpatrick (2012) proposes that the aims of English language teaching and learning should not be to equip learners with some particular types of English (i.e. American or British English) by forcing native-English pedagogies and neglecting the fact that most local learners are already multilingual. To ensure a practical use of the language, ELT should not only be tied to concepts of EFL-oriented pedagogy or idealized pedagogical norms of L1. Instead, as Kirkpatrick (2012) suggested, it should emphasize multilingual feasibility.

Therefore, the learning curricula should stress more on local cultures and varieties rather than those of the inner circle as proposed by Kirkpatrick (2012) above as the starting guideline for policymakers, curriculum designers, teachers, and trainers to design ELF curriculum in Thailand. Kirkpatrick’s proposal aligns with other educational stakeholders whose studies in different contexts confirm this (Seidhofer, 2011). Nevertheless, we acknowledge that implementing ELF teaching and learning curriculums in Thailand can be a very challenging task to accomplish since the current language policy, language ideology, teaching/learning materials, reference works and supplementary materials are exclusively published by western publishers with a massive focus on native English variety (such as Cambridge, Oxford, Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Macmillan and Longman (Methitham, 2009).

Implications of the study

It is important to remember that English has adopted a changing role in this 21st century, thus, English teachers should recognize and be aware of global happenings for language
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Boonsuk & Ambele

Teaching, language planning, and predicting language change. As discussed, it is clear that English has changed roles due to its widespread use around the globe, so there is a need to make it more appropriate in different ELF contexts. Considering its shifted roles to ELF, how it should be taught, learned, and used should be reconsidered and made more practical (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020).

To keep up with globalization and the transition of the English status as a world’s lingua franca, English teaching materials that support cultural diversity should be considered suitable. Hence, teaching/learning materials and curriculums should help learners recognize international values. As English speakers from diverse backgrounds employ the English language as a lingua franca, English is figuratively a bridging language between them. To become a successful communicator, learners should learn to recognize cultures other than theirs while learning English. As global citizens with broader linguacultural awareness and competence, Thai learners could be anticipated to become more adept at accommodating to cross-cultural communication. If the aim is to widen international understanding, teaching English with variety and cultural limitations would cultivate a sense of comfort zone where learners could quickly disapprove of any English strategies deemed non-traditional. Through such rejections, learners might refuse to understand and make a premature judgment that causes communication breakdowns as they feel insecured from unfamiliar English-speaking cultures. Thus, to prepare learners as global citizens in using English, learning materials should be incorporated based on how well they can encourage learners to make cross-cultural reflections and comparisons, involving their own and other cultures so that the learning can help them form a sphere of interculturality. Furthermore, the concept of cultural diversity should be the learning emphasis in ELT, and cultural contents should be introduced to learners to help them establish an understanding that communication reactions and behaviors can be interpreted and discussed using many different cultural perspectives. As Kirkpatrick (2012) stated, “insisting on a single target norm is considered as inappropriate, impractical, and unnecessary” in multilingual societies like Thailand. Teaching a foreign language (English) should not focus on specific goals, norms, or cultures, but on skills development and how to communicate appropriately and effectively either in local, national, or international contexts.

If educators are allowed to integrate local and global cultures into ELT materials, they would have access to alternative teaching approaches that are more responsive to current teaching requirements and targets, including English practicality, linguistic diversity, and cultural contexts. Reconceptualizing ELT for adaptability is hoped to better prepare learners for communicative efficiency in settings of multicultural and multilingual interlocutors. Adopting this communicative capacity is considered a desirable trait of current global citizenship. In addition, English teachers will, with ease, shift from the unpleasant periphery to a position of authority (in their own right) and can develop or establish more appropriate teaching and learning materials and classroom teaching and learning environments for their students. To this end, teachers will adjust or adapt their teaching to suit their teaching context. To effectively adhere to internationally acceptable English in a global EFL classroom, there is a need for a revision in the goals and curricula of ELT pedagogy including teaching and learning materials in Thailand, thereby facilitating the process of building Thai learners into becoming global intercultural citizens.
Conclusion

English has become a global language and a primary means of communication (Baker 2016; Boonsuk et al., 2021; Rose & Galloway, 2019). As a result, governments worldwide have inevitably adopted a national educational development policy to include English as an essential learning language. This phenomenon creates a significant rise in the number of non-native English language learners and a change to the status of English and its linguistic landscapes (Fang & Ren, 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2018; Jindapitak, 2019. This development produced a clear contrast between the new status quo and the past conditions, especially on the emergence of English varieties and their contextual applications among users with diverse linguacultural demographics. Therefore, this research aimed to explore English lecturers’ voices in Thai universities on existing EFL pedagogies and evaluate if they indicate that their practices are responsive to the changing English landscapes. Unfortunately, the findings revealed that the teaching management in Thailand did not yet reflect any adaptation to embrace the changing roles or status of the English language, where English is now globally owned. More specifically, the participants agreed that the taught pedagogies, teaching materials, and curriculums remained more conforming to native-speaker norms. In this regard, the participants further pointed out that the current English language teaching approaches were not practical to a 21st-century education. Hence, educational stakeholders, including administrators, policymakers, and curriculum designers, should reconsider by making relevant instructional adjustments to produce concrete implementations that meet today’s real-world requirements of English language utilization.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. From your perspective, what are the current roles of English?
2. Do you agree that English is a global language without a legitimate owner?
3. What are your views on the current ELT policy of Thailand?
4. How do you perceive the currently employed ELT approaches in Thailand?
5. What are your ideas on effective English teaching?
6. How satisfactory is the current English teaching at preparing you for global citizenship? Please elaborate.
7. How essential are English textbooks in today’s English language learning?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your ELT textbooks?
9. What do you see as today’s characteristics of an excellent textbook?
10. Can your ELT textbooks help build confidence when you speak English with foreigners?
11. What are your attitudes towards the general contents of your current ELT textbooks?
12. What are your attitudes towards the cultural contents of your current ELT textbooks?
13. If you have the power to decide, would you prefer the ELT textbooks made in Thailand by Thai authors to the ones made by L1 English speakers? Why?
14. What are the strengths and weaknesses of ELT textbooks made in Thailand by Thai authors?
15. What are the strengths and weaknesses of ELT textbooks made by L1 English speakers?
16. What are your opinions on the incorporation of the learners’ cultures into an ELT process?
Language Difficulties Faced by Saudi Diploma Students at King Abdulaziz University: A Case Study

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Abstract
This study aimed to explore the language difficulties faced by English diploma students and provide solutions to overcome them. The data collected in the form of a questionnaire administered to 39 female students were compared in percentages for closed-ended questions and thematically for open-ended ones. Results showed that diploma students struggled with listening, speaking and reading’s higher cognitive skills such as guessing the meaning from context and reading between the lines. In addition, tenses, question formations, and reported speech were the most difficult grammatical points for them. These challenges were attributed to the institutional, dispositional, situational, academic, and pedagogical barriers faced by students as adult learners resulting mainly from the students’ study gaps and their lack of contact with the English language. Solutions included the use of more varied activities and up-to-date interesting reading passages, more practice of listening and speaking inside and outside classrooms, and having a placement test before joining the diploma program.

Keywords: academic challenges, adult learning, diploma students, learning theories, pedagogical challenges, Saudi Arabia

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Introduction

Education is a life-long learning process that prepares an individual for life. It has many benefits including a prosperous career and financial security. More specifically, it increases adult students’ opportunities and improves their overall quality of life. It “is the best possible means for adults to grow in their life, achieve their goals, and give meaning to their existence…. as it develops in the adult learners the critical consciousness which is so vital to help them face situations and use their prior knowledge and experience to learn how to succeed in all the challenges and understand the world in a better way.” (Javed, 2017, p.59) As a result, the number of students enrolled in higher education programs is increasing. In the academic year 2017-2018, the number of students in Saudi Arabia amounted to 139.61 thousand whereas it was 58.94 thousand in 2013-2014 (Puri-Mirza, 2020).

To satisfy the labor market needs and fulfill the 2030 Saudi vision, the Deanship of Community Services and Continuing Education in our university is holding, among other training courses, eight student-paid qualifying diplomas which aim to support and resettle Saudis with the needed experience and knowledge. High school and university graduates are accepted to study in an evening class schedule in these programs which academic duration ranges from one to two years. Thus, getting a diploma in the English language in two years; four semesters (part1-4), was one of the options available for adult female Saudi learners in this research.

As a diploma teacher, the researcher noticed that some students were up to the level whereas others were facing difficulties and could not cope up with the level of their peers and the requirements of the diploma which resulted in their failure or withdrawal. Therefore, the researcher was motivated to explore the language difficulties faced by the students and their reasons which can often lead to some students’ attrition as “one way to increase successful participation in education and training is to tackle barriers to adult learning” (Roosmaa and Saar, 2011, p.3). Therefore, students' perceptions and their suggested solutions are crucial to overcome the challenges they face and to improve the program as a whole as Lucas (1993) assured “Determining problems that university students face clearly and concretely moving from their own individual evaluations will present important feedback in the development programs and services directed at young people” (cited in Doygun & Gulec, 2012, p. 1116).

Thus, the main objective of this study is to enhance the academic performance of English diploma students by:
1. Exploring the language difficulties encountered in the pursuit of their degree;
2. Providing solutions to these difficulties.

To achieve this aim, the following research questions are developed:
1. What are the language difficulties faced by the English diploma students?
2. Why are the English diploma students facing these language difficulties in their course of study?
3. How can these language difficulties be reduced?

The importance of this research stems from the fact that it is the first research, to the researcher’s knowledge, to tackle the challenges faced by English diploma students in Saudi Arabia in general and in our university, in particular, as the diploma program was recently
established (academic year 2018-2019). Thus, it is an attempt to fill the gap in the literature as “the lack of scientific research about Saudi adult learning leads to continued obstacles” (Alajlan et al., 2013, p.2). Furthermore, students’ perspective on the challenges they face is another strength of the study as it reveals the genuine and true challenges faced and the suggestions for the improvement of the diploma program. In addition, the findings of the study can be beneficial for other teachers in the diploma program, policymakers, course designers, and other academicians at the university level.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is based on the language teaching and learning theories related to adult learning and Cross (1981)'s adult learning barriers. To begin with adult learning theories, humanism and constructivist learning are among the core theories. Agrghode et al. (2017) defined constructivism as “Emphasis on learner involvement. Learners create their meaning. Conceptual understanding may differ among learners. It placed importance on experiences and promoting learning through experiential learning” (p.600). This means constructivism stresses on internal mental processes to build knowledge and generate sense from experience and meaning-making. In short, it enhances learning through experience, cognitive abilities, and skills. Teachers are facilitators who agree upon meanings with learners.

Likewise, humanistic psychology is a general term for learning theories that take feelings, attitudes, and values into account. Learning is a personal endeavor toward fulfillment “human beings control their own destiny. People are inherently good and are free to act. Behavior is a consequence of human choice. People have unlimited potential for growth” (Agrghode et al., 2017, p.601). The teacher is the facilitator who believes in the learners’ potentials of learning and creates a democratic, student-centered, welcoming, and safe environment. In this type of environment, the teacher promotes self-confidence and self-esteem, and the learner is encouraged to speak freely without the fear of criticism. The aim of learning in the humanistic theory is to support adult learners’ self-actualization, self-awareness, and independence. The role of teachers is to facilitate.

Andragogy is a teaching strategy or a set of principles related to humanistic theory in which “Adults are self-directed learners and learn through experience. Adults want immediate application. Adults learn best when they choose content and method of learning” (Agrghode et al., 2017, p.600). The perspective is that learning can be achieved with or without help. Learning aims to develop adults. Teachers support learners and emphasize individual motivation.

However, there should be a kind of balance between teacher – centered approach and student autonomy in teaching adult learners (Rydell, 1985; Johnson, 1996). Rydell (1985) assured that teachers should use more active modes of teaching and should require students to assume greater responsibility for their learning. Johnson (1996) also stressed, “there must be a fine balance between denying the student adequate opportunities for self-direction and providing too little structure” (p. 18). He further elaborated, “The teacher is a facilitator, resource person, and guide. The teacher will walk beside the student on this journey, not in front. The student and teacher will work together to find the literature which is best suited to the teacher-perceived needs of the student while still being attractive to the student” (p.61).
other words, the teacher becomes a facilitator and manager of the student’s learning environment. He shifts his mind from teacher-centered to student-centered education.

The previously mentioned theories illustrate how adult learners learn and how we can, as teachers, make what they have learned beneficial to their future lives. The teacher can adopt one of the theories illustrated above or make an amalgam of these theories to fit the situation and to suit his / her teaching style. Higgins and Elliott (2011) pointed out “Instructors should apply learning theory principles and motivation of learning to design a simple, easy and effective online instruction for better learner engagement”( cited in Agrghode et al., 2017, p.603).

As for adult learning barriers, Cross (1981) identified three types of barriers: institutional, situational, and dispositional. The following definition for each type of barrier is provided:

- Institutional: barriers that are a result of the “practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities such as inconvenient schedules or locations, fulltime fees for part-time study, inappropriate courses of study, and so forth” (p. 98). They also relate to the methods of designing, delivering, administering a course, and include financial support to learners to pay tuition fees, resources for learning, lack of support services, recognition of prior learning, and previously obtained academic credentials.
- Situational: barriers “arising from one’s situation in life at a given time such as job and home responsibilities” (p. 98). They include aging, life phases, and developmental stages and comprise part-time versus full-time and voluntary versus compulsory learning.
- Dispositional: barriers “related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner” (p. 98). They relate to learners’ inner feelings and their perceptions of their ability to register, attend, and complete learning activities. It includes low self-esteem, and a negative attitude about being an adult learner e.g. being too old, too busy, too tired, too sick, and not smart enough.

In addition to these previously mentioned challenges by Cross (1981), Potter and Alderman (1992) stressed the academic factors as barriers to university students (as cited in MacKeracher et al., 2006). Habibah (2006) also emphasized the personal challenges, professional challenges, and academic challenges, which are related to the skills for successful learning. Yasmin (2018) defined academic challenges as “the factors that are crucial to the process of teaching and learning. They include problems in teaching and learning oral expression and written expression, computer-related skills, critical and reflective skills, examinations and tests” (p.114).

Furthermore, MacKeracher et al. (2006) pointed out that pedagogical barriers to adult learners are due to:

“lack of understanding on the part of instructors, facilitators, and administrators about how adults learn; the benefits of learner-centered teaching and active learning; diversity among adult learners in terms of learning style and preferred types of learning activities and information;
and adult learners’ needs for relevancy in content, recognition of prior learning, respect from others, and a responsive lifelong learning system” (p.2).

The above theoretical framework provided a working definition of both the term “adult” and the various types of barriers encountered by the diploma students and guided the researcher in the thematic interpretation of data. Thus, in this research, the term “adult” is used to denote learners after compulsory learning, both formal and informal. It also refers to students acquiring postsecondary and tertiary education (Luka, 2019).

Literature Review

In this part, the literature review is designed by the research questions of the study. It gives an overview of what is meant by adult learning, characteristics of adult learners, and the types of challenges they face as shown by previous works of literature.

Adult learning is a “lifelong, continuing education” that includes “all daily tasks as well as human development and community activities” (Qrenba, 1980 as cited in Alajlan, et al. 2013, p.7). Furthermore, it is

A targeted process based on former knowledge and learning experience, self-directed learning, adults’ impact on the study process, pre-conditioned and meaningful, reachable goal learning and creation/ setting of an appropriate study situation. Adults who are pursuing study have to be well-aware why they pursue it, what they have to pursue and how they have to pursue it. Adult’s learning is self-directed, self-studying and autonomous. (Liepa & Spona, 2012 as cited in Luka, 2019, p. 163).

Teachers are facilitators who help students to “diagnose their own learning needs, define their learning objectives, put their learning strategies into practice, and finally evaluate the outcomes of the whole learning process.” (Javed, 2017, p.55)

Unlike traditional-aged college students, individualism is adult learners' most distinguishing characteristic. They are not homogenous and vary in regards to career experiences, family life, and educational background. They are self-directed learners because of “the wealth of prior experiential learning they bring to the classroom” (Rydell, 1985, p. 52). These experiences could be exploited by the teachers “in eliciting real-life examples, solving problem –based tasks” (Luka, 2019, p.153). They also have “a burning thirst for knowledge for its own sake.” (Rydell, 1985, p.52).

In previous literature, adult learners’ challenges varied. The top three challenges faced by adult students, based on research results, were financial, managing commitments, and academic preparedness (enrollment builders.com/blog/the –top-three-challenges-students-face).

Alajlan et al. (2013) stated that the obstacles facing adult education in Saudi Arabia were the lack of scientific research and curricular, teacher, and learner’s obstacles. The reason behind these obstacles was the unclear concept of adult education in Saudi Arabia. The researchers also advocated that adult education is a lifelong continuing education that should extend to include all
daily tasks as well as human development and community activities. They recommended spreading the culture of adult education in society, giving more training courses for adult teachers, and establishing more departments for adult learning at universities to overcome the obstacles.

In Yasmin et al. (2018), students’ challenges were dispositional, situational, institutional, academic, and class size. In Doygun and Gulec (2012), Turkish students faced problems like accommodation and nutrition, adaptation and orientation, anxiety about the future and unemployment, and qualified education. In Fook and Sidhu (2015), American undergraduate and postgraduate students faced eight challenges: cognitive challenge, becoming an active learner, coping with reading material, instructional problem, language barrier, time management, the burden of assignments, and culture difference in higher education.

Furthermore, post-graduate adult learners in Baharudin et al. (2013) faced the following internal challenges: dispositional (anxiety towards learning), time-management challenge, situational or personal challenges (family and finance). Other combinations of challenges included administration of faculty, resources, stress, career, knowledge, experience, journey or commuting, the ability to digest what is being learned, and the students’ inability to converse well in English during presentations and when expressing their ideas in the classroom.

In Roosmaa and Saar (2011), students’ challenges were situational and institutional. Situational barriers included having financial problems, time constraints (balance between family, work, and learning), transportation problems, and lack of preparation for the study program. Institutional barriers like time-related reasons were mentioned as reasons for not participating in education.

In Deggs (2011), students faced three barriers in the online undergraduate degree program. The first one was intrapersonal like time and money management, the balance of family responsibilities, handling of physical and emotional matters, and fear of failure. The second barrier was career and job-related barriers; situational, including meeting job expectations, lack of support from the workplace. The third barrier was an academic-related barrier including understanding and utilizing technology, lack of face-to-face interaction with faculty and peers, balancing academic course loads, meeting the general expectations and lack of instruction feedback, and coping with a learning disability.

As shown from the above findings of research papers, adults are facing many challenges in their pursuit of education. However, these challenges have to be dealt with by learners, teachers, and admin of programs based on their understanding of the peculiar characteristics of adults.

Method

This study is carried out to explore answers to research questions. To this end, it embraces the exploratory case study research design because it “provides numerous opportunities for research and analysis” (Coimbra & Martins, 2013). Therefore, it is used here to explore a particular issue; diploma students’ language difficulties, in-depth within the boundaries of a specific environment, situation, or organization; diploma program. This paper
also provides solutions from students’ perspectives and evaluates them based on previous literature’s research results. However, putting these solutions in effect and evaluating their results, to fully apply the case study principles, are beyond the boundaries of this research.

Participants
The sample included two groups of female students (n=39) in parts 2 and 3 of the diploma program in the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020. It is a convenient sample chosen based on the availability and suitability of the sample for the study as the researcher was teaching the reading and grammar subjects. This involvement in the context brought advantages of proximity and ease of access to data. This sample represents the target population; diploma students, as it is sufficient in number and as participants share the same social and educational backgrounds with the target group and therefore the research results can be generalized.

Instrument
A convergent mixed methodology was employed combining qualitative and quantitative data by the use of a survey questionnaire that included ten closed and open-ended questions. According to Creswell (2013):

The purpose of a convergent (or parallel or concurrent) mixed methods design is to simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the results to understand a research problem. A basic rationale for this design is that one data collection form supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form and that a more complete understanding of a research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. (p.540)

The research questionnaire started with demographic questions about the respondents; age, previous study, and the aim for joining the diploma. The rest of the questions were grouped under four main headings: language/skills difficulties, causes of difficulties, solutions, and students’ evaluation of the program; what they liked and what they wanted to change. Participants were allowed in the close-ended questions to choose more than one answer and were encouraged to add their input in the open-ended ones. Thus, the mixed - method methodology helps to get a deeper insight into the challenges faced by the diploma students, their causes, and their solutions.

Procedures
The questionnaire was given to specialized colleagues for revision to ensure that the questions are following the purpose of the study. Data collected from the closed-ended questions were analyzed statistically and data collected from the open-ended questions were analyzed thematically. The ethical code of conduct was adhered to by administering the questionnaire after the final exam and by explaining to the participants the research objective and ensuring that the use of the data would be solely for the research purpose.

The researcher was responsible for data collection and interpretation in the light of adult learning theory, adult characteristics, and previous research results. The research alignment was achieved by the coordination of the research objectives, the research questions, the instrument
of the study, and the data analysis. This research’s results and findings can be generalized in similar contexts and social backgrounds.

Results

This section shows the results of the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire questions showing the challenges students faced during their study in the English diploma and their overall evaluation of the program. The analysis of the demographic information of participants showed that their age range was between 19 and 37. Thirteen students were above 25 (37%) and the majority were between 19 and 24 (63%). This shows that some students had study gaps. As for their academic qualifications, the majority were high school graduates (51.3%), followed by BA holders (28.2%) and BSc holders (2.6%). As for their objective to join the English diploma, all the respondents agreed that they wanted to improve their English language. Some of them added various reasons besides language improvement:

1. self-development (2 respondents), learning and experience (1 respondent)
2. Getting a certificate (4 respondents)
3. Getting a job (3 respondents)
4. Learning new vocabulary (1 respondent)
5. Professional development/ pass proficiency exams; TOEFL and IELTS (2 respondents)
6. Everyday life practices (1 respondent)

Although participants did not take a placement test or any entrance exam before joining the diploma, when they were asked in the questionnaire whether it was important to have a placement test or not and why, the majority thought it was necessary to have a placement test for various reasons: 1) “for students to know their level” (6 respondents), 2) “it is a way to improve the language and continue learning” (1 respondent), 3) “to be placed in the appropriate level” (2 respondents), 4) “to concentrate on the week points and improve them” (1 respondent), 5) “to allocate the subjects to study based on the level” (1 respondent), 6) “advanced students will be placed in different groups” (1 respondent), 7) “everyone will be in the suitable level” (2 respondents). (8) “to know where to start” (1 respondent), 9) “to know the learners’ level and enhance the academic achievements of students”, (1 respondent) 10) “to learn the language gradually based on my level” (1 respondent). For those who said “no need to have a placement test”, their reasons were 1) being afraid of rejection “the diploma is for learning and if I didn’t pass the placement test, would I still have the chance to join the program?” Another reason was “no because learning is a process that never ends.” A third reason was “the result of the placement test sometimes does not reflect the level of the student so it is better not to have it.”

As for the language skills that participants had difficulty with, listening was at the top (42.9%), followed by speaking (28%).

| Table 1: Adult learners’ difficulties related to language skills |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Skills        | Percentage (%)  | Count (N)      |
| Listening     | 42%             | 18             |
| Speaking      | 28%             | 12             |
Reading | 9% | 4
Writing | 21% | 9
Total | 100% | 43
Mean | 2.09 |
Confidence Interval @ 95% | [1.743 - 2.443] |
Standard Deviation | 1.171 |
Standard Error | 0.179 |

Reasons for the difficulty of listening were “different accent” (1 respondent), and “if the speaker is speaking fast” (2 respondents). For speaking, the lack of practice was mentioned as a major challenge “Speaking is a problem because I don’t have anyone to practice with.”

As for the reading skills, guessing the meaning from context received the highest percentage (41.3%), followed by reading between the lines (37%) as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Adult learners’ difficulties related to reading skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Skills</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Count (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predicting</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading for main ideas</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading for details</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading between the lines</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guessing the meaning from context</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval @</td>
<td>[3.733 - 4.354]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>1.074</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the grammatical rules that participants struggled with, their answers can be shown in the following table:

Table 3: Adult learners’ difficulties related to grammar rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical Rules</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Count (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenses</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative clauses</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active &amp; Passive</td>
<td>19.48%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If sentences</td>
<td>6.49%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>3.89%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions &amp; Clauses</td>
<td>6.49%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions Formation</td>
<td>10.38%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Verbs</td>
<td>5.19%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported Speech</td>
<td>7.79%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The English tenses were the grammatical aspect that received the highest percentage, as shown in the above table, followed by the active and passive forms and question formation.

As for the reasons for these difficulties, respondents put the lack of exposure to the language in ordinary life (26%) as the first reason for their difficulties followed by lack of practice and the way of teaching which received equal percentages (15%) of the respondents' choices. The gap between study periods (10%) was also considered the cause of their barriers. Other factors that received fewer percentages can be shown in the following table:

Table 4: Reasons for the difficulties that adult learners face

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Difficulties</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Count(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time for each subject</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of practice</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English is not the medium of instruction in schools</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of exposure to the language in ordinary life</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching style</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course books</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam methods</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gap between study periods</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing the new grammatical rule to Arabic grammar</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Interval @ 95%</td>
<td>[4.194 - 5.185]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>2.359</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for what can help to improve their level, respondents chose the use of varied exercises/ activities (22.5%), followed by more practice (14.7%), up-to-date interesting reading topics (13.2%), and having placement test before joining the diploma (12.2%) as the following table shows.

Table 5: Suggestions to improve adult learners’ level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions to improve your level</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Count(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placement test</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More practice</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the open-ended questions, answers were grouped thematically for more clarification of results into what participants learned in the diploma, what they liked, and what they wanted to change. Qualitative results related to these themes, from exemplar participants, are given as follows:

1) As for what participants learned in the diploma, 12 respondents replied in general that they improved their language skills or level. The speaking skill was the skill that the majority of students said they improved during their study (9 respondents), followed by vocabulary and grammar (8 respondents each), and then writing (7 respondents). Respondents said that they were able to: “present in front of my colleague”, “to talk and ask when I don’t understand”, “more confident in speaking”, “speak more fluently”, “developed the ability to speak in public” and “learned how to speak confidently even if I made mistakes”. For vocabulary, they said they “learned new words so it became easy to form sentences and speak”.

2) Regarding what participants liked about the diploma program, answers were categorized under important headings: content, teaching and teachers, and program organization. Generally, participants said the diploma program integrated all the language skills, it was an academic program, and it was an opportunity to learn new things “I learned the language more than before as I took courses in private institutes. The diploma is intensive, wonderful, and varies in nature.” More specifically, they said the content is clear, varied, and easily transferred to students. It is, intensive concentrating only on the skills, and comprehensive as it has all the language skills. As for teaching and teachers, participants praised the cooperation of teachers (3 respondents), way of teaching (6 respondents), transferring content simply and clearly, and the method of assessment. As for the program organization, participants liked the intensity of lectures, the evening schedule, services provided, organization of the program, the understanding of the circumstances of students, and the reasonable price/fees.

3) As for what they wanted to change in the program, respondents suggested adding more training and practice of the language to the content of the program, having more
interesting topics in speaking and reading subjects, having small projects chosen by students, reducing the intensity of the course, and increasing the time for writing in the lectures. One student remarked, "Exam questions have to be easy and do not include questions out of the book". As for the program organization, they suggested having a placement test to place students based on their level; part 1 to be basic for beginners and then becomes more challenging. Also, they wanted to increase lecture time and break time, change the distribution of subjects in the schedules to mingle easy with difficult subjects on the same day, change the evening schedule, change the teaching building as it is far from the university gate and the air condition in classes as it is very cold, and reduce the fees. As for teachers, they wanted to change the teaching styles of some teachers.

**Discussion and Implications**

To answer the research questions concerning the language difficulties faced by the diploma students, their reasons and how to reduce them, the results emerged from the above analysis of data were found to be related to the institutional, dispositional, situational, academic, and pedagogic challenges which were regarded by previous literature as the main barriers for adult learners.

**Institutional challenges**

Generally, participants liked the program, the services provided, and the organization. However, some wanted to increase lecture time and break time, change the distribution of subjects to have easy and difficult ones on the same day. Regarding the evening schedule, students’ opinions differed. Some liked the evening schedule and others did not. In addition, they wanted to change the building where classes took place as it is far from the main gate of the university. Regarding the program fees, one student commented favorably on the fees and another wanted to reduce them. This discrepancy between participants proves the individualism of adult students as what one student likes might not suit the other and vice versa. The barrier of program fees was also faced by students in Baharudin et al. (2013) and the solution proposed is applicable here as well which is to pay fees in installments.

Besides, the lack of preparation of students for the study program was one of the challenges lately discovered because students did not enter an entrance or placement test before joining the diploma. This resulted in having students of various competency levels in the same class.

**Dispositional challenges**

Students’ opinions differed on the importance of having a placement test. Some recognized its value for the student and others did not want to have it. This can be attributed to their anxiety towards the placement test because its result might prevent them from joining the diploma. This fear and attitude towards exams can be attributed to participants’ previous educational experience which was test-oriented “much of the teaching inside the classroom is test-driven instructions that is generally geared towards passing the final exams” (Mustafa, 2002 as cited in Al-Qahtani, 2016, p.2). Students who got low scores or failed the test can overcome this dispositional barrier if they would be provided with remedial courses to regain or attain the base level of English competency for the diploma (Baharudin et al. 2013).
Situational challenges

Almost (37%) of the participants are above 25 years old which means they had study gap periods for personal reasons. These periods surely affected their level of English. They also lacked exposure to the language as English is a foreign language in Saudi Arabia and it is spoken only on a limited scale.

However, this diploma is not compulsory and participants, being self-directed adult learners, voluntarily applied for it recognizing its benefit in changing their lives in different ways. Some of the participants showed anxiety about the future and unemployment and that is why they decided to join the diploma to develop their abilities, to have jobs, and to pass proficiency exams. Having clear goals for joining the diploma is a major characteristic of adult learners “Most adults come to learn for a definite reason. They are goal-oriented, pragmatic learners. They want their learning to help them produce something that is of real value to them.” (Johnson, 1996, p.16). Other participants were learning-oriented and wanted just to learn English for its own sake. This accords with the classification of adult learners into target-oriented (learning to fulfill definite need), activity-oriented, and learning-oriented (learning for the sake of learning) (Long, 2002 as cited in Luka, 2019)

Academic challenges

Participants had the most difficulty with listening, and speaking; the two skills that require continuous practice. In the reading classes, higher skills or cognitive / inference skills like guessing the meaning from context and reading between the lines were problematic areas for the majority of participants. This finding of the study is in agreement with previous research which showed that Saudi EFL readers face major reading- problems in understanding the meaning of a text, predicting and using prior knowledge, and limited vocabulary (Raihan et al., 2012). Al-Qahtani (2016) also pointed out “there is a huge gap between Saudi students’ actual reading proficiency level and their expected reading proficiency, even at the university level.” (p. 12) He found out that Saudi students had problems with guessing the meaning from context and drawing conclusions from information that was not explicitly stated (reading between the lines) due to the same reason mentioned in this research; lack of exposure to the target language, and other reasons like unfamiliar and unsuitable reading topics, lack of reading skills training and students’ limited vocabulary.

In grammar, tenses, question formations, and reported speech were the most difficult grammatical points. These academic challenges are due to the fact that language skill level declines with time and the lack of exposure and daily contact. Thus, it might take some time and effort to get accustomed to learning after a longer disruption in one’s learning path. During this period, increasing student vocabulary and more practice on the critical thinking skills will help students to master the skills especially the inference and cognitive skills; “careful reading skills” (Al-Qahtani, 2016, p.9). Other solutions included the use of a variety of activities, more practice of grammar rules, and up-to-date interesting reading topics.

Pedagogical challenges

The majority of participants praised teachers. They commented on their cooperation, their style of teaching, and how they transferred the content simply and clearly. However,
participants complained of the lack of practice and the way of teaching of some teachers. For those teachers, they "should have expertise, empathy, enthusiasm and clarity” (Johnson, 1996).

The diversity of language levels in the same classroom was one of the challenges faced by the participants and teachers. This problem was mentioned as a challenge for foreign language teaching (Al- Qahtani, 2016), especially in crowded classrooms. Richards and Renandya (2002) argued, “A great many of teachers would like to teach in classes composed of students who are close to one another in terms of competence level. However, with the exception of several of them who can be counted as lucky, they teach in classes composed of fifty or more students with different competence levels.” (cited by Doygun & Gulec, 2012, p.1118). Luckily in our context, classes are not crowded still the mixed ability classes lays a burden on teachers to find a way to address and engage all students by “adapting the instruction to the learners’ levels of experience and skill development; and continuously considering the learners’ perspective.” (Johnson, 1996, p.16). Teachers also should provide individual attitudes to sustain the students’ level of motivation (Luka, 2019).

Therefore, a different teaching strategy might be necessary to accommodate differences between learners in their personal and situational circumstances “Adults have different needs, motivations and also constraints in their life.” (Baharudin et al. 2013, p.773). This strategy should cater to the experience of participants, aging limitations, optimizing personal development, and learners’ opinions as regards the availability and organization of learning programs.

Conclusion & Recommendations

To be successful in today’s world, one should have competitive abilities and skills. Among the essential skills needed are the English language skills, a fact which motivated adult learners to join the English language diploma. However, in their effort to develop themselves they faced language difficulties related to institutional, dispositional, situational, academic, and pedagogic challenges which as Yasmin et al. (2018) affirmed is a natural and healthy phenomenon.

Generally speaking, it can be said that the diploma program was beneficial for students. Although they mentioned that speaking was a great challenge to them, they recognized that the program developed their speaking skills, vocabulary, and grammar. However, there were some language difficulties and organizational drawbacks such as the lack of preparation of some students for the study program and the diversity of student language levels in the same classroom.

Thus, it is important to know the challenges first and then exploit the traits of adult learners to face them. Diploma students are self-directed and intrinsically motivated and if their difficulties will be considered by the admin and teachers who will boast their abilities, these problems will diminish. Solutions included using more varied activities, up -to -date interesting reading passages, more practice of listening and speaking inside and outside classrooms, and having a placement test before joining the diploma program.

Other recommendations to overcome the challenges are to:
Language Difficulties Faced by Saudi Diploma Students

1. Spread the culture of adult education in society, giving more training courses for adult teachers, and establishing more departments for adult learning at universities to overcome the obstacles. (Alajlan et al. 2013)

2. Have remedial courses for the underprepared students to regain or attain the base level of English competency before joining the diploma course. (Baharudin et al. 2013)

3. Conduct an annual survey to identify challenges and address them (Yasmin et al. 2018)

4. Award more scholarships to students to cope with the financial challenges (Yasmin et al. 2018)

5. Pay fees in installments (Baharudin et al. 2013)

6. Stress learners’ ability to adapt and find solutions for their problems as adult learners (Baharudin et al. 2018)

7. Treat students as independent learners, they have to find solutions to their challenges themselves.

8. Allow students to participate in choosing content and method of learning (Agrghode et al., 2017)

9. Have a course program that considers adult learners’ specific needs and special educational treatment to overcome learning barriers. (Luka, 2019)

10. Create a more positive learning environment starting from initial education to lower the dispositional barriers to learning in adulthood. (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011)

Finally, yet importantly, enriching adult learners’ skills and knowledge will result in fostering their inclusion in the labor market and becoming true lifelong learners. (Luka, 2019).

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References


A New Approach for Paraphrasing and Rewording a Challenging Text

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Abstract
This article aims to propose a practical model for intra-lingual translation or paraphrase in another term. Paraphrase is a restatement of a text, rewording something written or spoken, especially to achieve greater clarity. This approach could help a troubled translator who is having issues translating a complex text into a receptor language by assessing the source text and reconstructing the contents in a simpler semantic structure. (Larson, 2012) Noam Chomsky's generative–transformational model (1957, 1965) and Larson's (2012) methodology have been followed to analyze sentences into a series of related levels governed by the help of several other techniques. To achieve this, firstly, the concepts; Intralingual translation, rewording, paraphrasing, and restatement are identified and explained. Secondly, methods of rewording are unpacked, then other elements that play an essential role in paraphrasing are presented. Thirdly, steps of paraphrasing are applied to the text Taj Mahal where skewings between semantic structure and grammatical features are studied and unskewed. Lastly, a conclusion is drawn from the findings to verify the hypothesis of the paraphrase. The findings and results of rewording are also briefly discussed.

Keywords: antonyms, paraphrase, reciprocal words, restatement, skewing, synonyms, substitute words

Introduction:

We, easterners, are much different from Europeans in many ways. Most of us prefer short poems over long, thick novels of the West. Two-hour symphonies bore some of us to death. Many members in our parliaments have no more a function than what a chorus does in Shakespeare's plays. Accordingly, as an Asian, I am for more practice and a little theory in teaching translation studies. In the preface of the book "Meaning Based Translation" (Larson, 1998), Newmark emphasized the need for additional practical works in the subject of translation studies, claiming that the books, which have primarily been authored by Germans, have been too philosophical and abstract to relate to any of the translator's everyday issues. Nida was one of the first researchers to deal practically with the cultural and the numerous linguistic issues of translation. Larson has produced the first textbook designed to be used in the classroom. Therefore, Larson’s Meaning Based Translation (2012) has been one of my favorites for a long time. I and my students have studied and paraphrased complicated texts step by step following the instructions in the book. With a little theory thrown in, we have created a sample model that can serve as a guide for translators, linguists, and researchers.

Literature Review

Definition

The term translation itself has several meanings: Translation, according to Larson (2012), is essentially the act of transferring the meaning of the source language into a receptor language. Translation occurs when a form of the first language is transferred to a second language via a semantic structure. The meaning of a word or set of words can be well understood because of its role in the whole linguistic expression where they occur. The translation can refer to

- the general subject field,
- the product (the text that has been translated) or
- the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating).

Types of Translation

A translator is expected to turn an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language when translating two separate written languages (the target language or TL). (Munday, 2016) This type corresponds to interlingual translation. Jakobson (1959/2004) makes a significant distinction between three types of written translation:

- intralingual translation, or 'rewording': 'an interpretation of verbal signs through other signs of the same language;
- interlingual translation, or 'translation proper': 'an interpretation of verbal signs employing some other language;
- intersemiotic translation, or 'transmutation': 'an interpretation of verbal signs using signs of non-verbal sign systems.

Paraphrase and Rewording

In this article, we will deal with intralingual translation, in other terms rewording or paraphrasing, that holds important information about how meaning is created in texts. We will do our best to show how to make a complicated English text or paragraph easier through paraphrasing making a translator’s job easier.
The term paraphrase is explained by Oxford English Dictionary (2012) as a restatement of a text, rewording of something written or spoken, especially to achieve greater clarity. Newmark (1988) defines it as amplification or explanation of the meaning of a segment of the text used in an 'anonymous' text when it is poorly written or has essential implications and omissions. For example, a Spanish siesta may be restated by a phrase; ‘a rest or a nap, especially one taken in the early afternoon during the hottest hours of the day in a hot climate.

Larson (2012) calls the process of paraphrasing "unpacking" the semantic structure of a word which is sometimes called restatement” (p. 65)

Restatement technically means to say the same thing in another way. In this kind of restating:
- there should be no change in the semantic components;
- there should be no additions or deletions, but the exact meaning should be carried by the restatement as much as possible
- there should be no skewing between the grammar and the semantics,
- each concept should be made explicit, and in this way, all of the meaning is brought out.

Paraphrase, from simple text analysis to machine translation, has a wide range of applications in linguistics. In this article, we have followed the following procedure: We will minimize the complex and compound sentences into simple kernel sentences (propositions) in terms of syntax; turn complicated, abstract words into simple concrete words using transformational rules; and replace the words mentioned above with synonyms, antonyms, and reciprocal words where necessary.

Methods
In our work, we will follow Noam Chomsky's generative–transformational model (1957, 1965). He proposes; four groups of word classes; deep, surface structures and Kernel sentences as the way of weighing any world language in the same scale. Larson (2012) has developed the best methodology to apply the above-mentioned rules step by step to a complicated, presented below clearly.

Four groups of Word Classes
Larson, benefitting from Chomsky's model, has developed a new methodology to analyze the source text. According to Larson (2012), the smallest unit in the semantic structure is a meaning component (morpheme). Meaning components group together to form concepts (words). Concepts make semantic propositions (clauses) that exist in all languages.

Meaning components and concepts are classified semantically into four main groups; things, events, attributes, and relations.
1- Events include all verbs; (actions, process, and experiences), e.g., run, fall, grow, think.
2- Things include all nouns; (animate beings, natural and supernatural, and all inanimate entities), e.g. woman, horse, book, table.
3- Attributes include all adjectives and adverbs; (attributes of quality and quantity ascribed to things or events), e.g. big, fast, hot, soft, rough, slowly, suddenly, few, all.
4- Relations in other terms, *function words*, include all *affixes, prepositions, conjunctions, and copulas* posited between any two of the semantic units e.g., with, by, because, since, and, therefore, after, pre-, into, of, and, be).

**Kernels and Propositions**

Chomsky states that the structural relations described in this model to be a universal feature of human language. *Kernels* are simple, active, and declarative sentences that require minimum transformation. E.g., the deer sucked her fawn. Murray (2016). They are the essential structural elements out of which the language builds its elaborate surface structures. Larson (2012) prefers to use the term *propositions* instead of kernels. Propositions are to be obtained from the ST surface structure by a reductive process of back transformation. Examples: “I cannot fly.” “She bought a dress.” “I am a teacher.”

**Surface and Deep Structures**

American linguist Noam Chomsky popularized the terms *deep structure* and *surface structure* in the 1960s and 70s. The deep structure represents meaning, and the surface structure is the actual sentence we see. Through an analysis of the surface structure, a language, so to speak, is restored back to its factory settings, and become ready to translate. Behind the surface, (grammatical, lexical, phonological) structure is the deep (semantic) structure, the meaning (Larson, 2012).

The key features of this model, as explained by Murray (2016), can be summarized simply as follows:
1. Phrase-structure rules generate the deep structure.
2. Getting help from transformational rules, the deep structure is transformed, relating one underlying structure to another (e.g., active to passive),
3. A final surface structure is produced, which is subject to phonological and morphemic rules.

For example:
1. *Surface Structure*: Usman and John met in the restaurant to dine. When they finished eating, Usman left first, and then John also went.
   *Deep Structure*: I came to the store. I bought ice cream.

**Skewing in Translation**

The skewing occurs between the grammar and the semantic categories. Larson (2012) warns translators to be aware of skewing because they exist in all modes of surface structures. Skewing is defined in the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary as *deviation from a straight line*. However, in linguistic terms, "skewing" means *the diversity or the lack of one-to-one correlation between form and meaning*. (Larson, 2012, p. 10) If a noun in one language corresponds to a noun in the target language, that will create no problem. However, in contrasting languages, there is no correlation between two different parts of speech. Where one language uses the verb with some degree of frequency, another language may be expressing the same meanings using the verbal noun.
The skewing frequently occurs between semantic classes and parts of speech. Many languages can use an event concept as a noun in grammar. For example, in English, death is a noun based on the event concept to die. Strength is a noun based on the attribute concept strong, and a happy life is a noun phrase based on the concept to live happily. In some languages, some forms modify nouns that refer to event concepts, as, for example, In the phrase rosy cheeks, the adjective rosy refers to things, so the semantic structure would be the cheeks that look like roses. There is a skewing between grammar and the semantic structure (Larson, 2012).

Example of Analysis

The words of a language on the surface structure are classified by distribution in the grammar. The words in a sentence are categorized using word classes, such as subject, predicate, object, and so on. For example, if we say, “The plan is nice,” the word plan would be classified as a noun in English grammar. The plan here is used as the subject of grammatical construction. However, it is an action that one does; it is an event. There is, therefore, a skewing between semantic classes and grammatical classes at this point (Larson, 2012).

Table 1. Examples from (Nida 1964a: 64), (Larson 2012) in phrase-level:
Note 1. Adapted from Nida 1964, p. 64) and Larson (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surface Structure</th>
<th>Skewing</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Deep Structure</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will of God</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>Will is a thing in the sentence. It is originally an event</td>
<td>God wills</td>
<td>Subject, God and event, wills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creation of the world</td>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>Creation is a thing in the sentence. It is originally an event</td>
<td>(God) created the world.</td>
<td>An agent (God) is added. It was implicit in the surface structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death of the dancer</td>
<td>death, dancer</td>
<td>The concept of death and dancer are things (nouns) in the surface structure. They are events &amp; actions in the deep structure.</td>
<td>(The man or woman) that danced, died.</td>
<td>The proposition gets an agent, man or woman. Dancer became ‘a person who dances.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>falling star attribute</td>
<td>falling</td>
<td>falling is an attribute here but refers to an event concept.</td>
<td>a star which is falling</td>
<td>A star became an agent, and falling became an event.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The sentence level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surface Structure</th>
<th>Skewing</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Deep Structure</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness is important</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>The thing forgiveness becomes an event.</td>
<td>It is important to forgive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sheep were taken to the slaughter.</td>
<td>slaughter</td>
<td>The thing slaughter becomes an event.</td>
<td>(They) took the sheep (somewhere). They slaughtered it.</td>
<td>A passive sentence becomes an active one. One sentence becomes two simple propositions. The agent of the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A New Approach for Paraphrasing and Rewording a Challenging Text
Polat, Bajak & Zhumaeva

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>She was told of the death of Hassan.</th>
<th>death</th>
<th>The thing death becomes an event.</th>
<th>Somebody told. Hassan died.</th>
<th>The passive sentence becomes active. One sentence becomes two simple sentences. The agent shifts. She becomes Hassan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly there was a great earthquake.</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>The thing earthquake becomes a thing and an event.</td>
<td>Suddenly the earth began to quake.</td>
<td>A compound word becomes two separate words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her singing is too loud.</td>
<td>singing, loud</td>
<td>A thing singing becomes an event. An adjective loud becomes an adverb.</td>
<td>She sings very loudly.</td>
<td>Possessive pronoun her becomes, she.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Elements Playing an Important Role in Paraphrasing**

There are several basic "elements" in creating paraphrases: synonyms, near-synonyms, substitute words, and reciprocal words. They all play an essential role in paraphrasing.

**Synonyms**

Synonyms are one of the best sources of paraphrase. They are used to create more varied and fluent text. The interchangeable character of words gives rise to paraphrases. For example, the English words wage, salary, income, and pay can be used interchangeably to express a form of periodic payment established between an employer and an employee (Haas, 2000).

Larson (2012) states that, although there are very similar words in any language, in meaning, there are very few exact synonyms. Even if the words are identical in essence, they might not have the same usage in sentence and paragraph structures. The terms often and frequently are close synonyms. There are some groups of words that are equivalent in their basic meaning but have additional positive or negative implications. One word may be appropriate in one situation and the other appropriate in a different situation. One may be more formal and another less formal.

The words speak, tell, and say all have an ordinary meaning. However, there are only specific contexts in which they are interchangeable. Gülmek, (to laugh), tebessüm etmek (to smile), and sırtmak (to grin) in Turkish are also synonymous words but with a big difference in usage. Even though cop, policeman, and police officer all refer to the same thing, police officer is more formal than cop. A target language may have more words to choose from the source language or not have any specific word for each synonym of the source language. The translator must be aware of the very minute differences between words and near-synonyms to choose the word with the right connotation.

Baker (1992) states that words that we might think of as synonyms or near-synonyms will often have entirely different sets of collocates. English speakers typically break the rules, but they do not break regulations; they typically waste time but not squandering time. (1986, p. 281). Despite the fact that the adjectives: unblemished, spotless, flawless, immaculate, and...
impeccable are synonyms or near-synonyms, they do not combine freely with the same set of nouns.

**Antonyms**

The antonym of a term, according to Larson (1997), is the exact opposite or contrasts in some parts of its meaning. All languages will have antonyms, but different languages will have other pairs. For example, in English, we distinguish flesh and meat between humans and animals. In Turkish, there is only one-word, et which is used for both animals and men.

It can sometimes be beneficial to a translator looking for an antonym, the word opposite in meaning. He may simply construct a negative form of that antonym. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) call it the negation of opposite under the category of Modulation. For example, it does not seem unusual, and it can also be said like it is very typical. It is said that in some Dagestani dialects, they do not have a word for love. They have the phrase want instead. While others speak to the girl they love, "I love you!" they simply say, "I want you!" In English, the words good and bad are antonyms. However, in Kyrgyz, the distinction is made by the word beautiful, suluu, contrasting with the same word beautiful linked to a negative suffix, not-beautiful, suluu emes. That is, there are not two separate words; there is simply beautiful and not beautiful.

**Substitute Words**

In speaking and writing, we try to avoid repeating words, phrases, or clauses. We use substitute forms to do this:

A: Pam always brings us back chocolates when she travels.
B: Oh, nice.
A: She brought some Belgian ones from her last trip, which were delicious.
B: Lucky you! (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/substitution)

Substitute words are utilized when receptor language natural patterns prefer various terms to refer to the same thing or event, according to Larson (2012), and the reverse may also be true. It would be more realistic to use substitute words in the receptor language if the original term has been repeated several times. It is not necessary to interpret substitute words literally. Instead, natural patterns of the receptor language for substitute words should be used. Example:

"My old Mercedes broke down again. It has been a good car. But it is time to get rid of the old thing." In this paragraph, Mercedes has been referred to by it, car, and thing. These are all substitute words for the antecedent Mercedes. A substitute word refers to something already introduced to context. Sometimes the substitute word will be more generic. For example, car is a more generic word than Plymouth, and thing is more generic than car. However, it is a pronoun, a substitute word that may substitute for any noun

**Reciprocal Words**

Most languages have sets of words, which are reciprocal of one another. This changes the semantics and point of view of the SL. As Larson (2012) suggested, this technique may sometimes help translate where the receptor language has a specific word used in the same way as the source language. It may be that the same meaning can be communicated by using a reciprocal word. For example, the government gave a large grant to the miners, which might in
some translation need to be translated conversely; the miners received a large grant from the government. Style in some language may make one phrasing more correct than the other. In Turkish, there is no word for being born. “I was born in 1995” can only be translated into Turkish as; “my mother gave birth to me in 1995.”

Text Analysis and Paraphrase

The Text: Creation History of Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal is actually an integrated complex of structures, with the white-domed marble mausoleum being its most significant component. Entrusted to a board-of-architects by Emperor Shah Jahan, the construction of the Taj Complex began about 1631 AD. The principal mausoleum was completed in 1648 AD by employing thousands of artisans and craftsmen, whereas the outlying buildings and gardens were finished five years later in 1653 AD. The Taj, the ultimate expression of love, speaks volumes of indulgence coming from an overflowing treasury and political security of that era and much more by way of the finesse in art and science of architecture.

Definitions of highlighted words

- **Dome** a large hemispherical roof or ceiling
- **Marble** something (such as a piece of sculpture) composed of or made from
- **Mausoleum** a large tomb, or a large gloomy building or room especially: a usually stone building with places for the entombment of the dead above ground

Paraphrase and Analysis

In this part, the text Taj Mahal that has four sentences will be paraphrased and analyzed. First, the original sentence in the surface structure is presented below. In the deep structure, it is paraphrased, and lastly, in the commentary part, all the techniques used in the paraphrase are explained.

**Surface Structure**

1. The Taj Mahal is actually an integrated complex of structures, with the white-*domed marble* mausoleum being its most *significant component*.

**Deep Structure**

The Taj Mahal is actually a group of buildings joined together. It has a mausoleum with a white *dome* made of *marbles*. It the most *important* part of the complex.

**Commentary**

- Advanced words and complex structures in the source text are replaced with more simple synonyms and equivalent forms; *significant* to *important*, *component* to *part*, *construction* to *building*, *integrated* to *joined*, *complex* to *group*.
- The word order of the surface structure has been slightly modified.
- Long propositional clusters (sentences) were divided into two or more propositions (clauses).
- The phrase Taj Mahal is substituted with the terms: *a building*, and *it*.
- *It* substituted the mausoleum.
- Skewings are handled. For example, things (nouns) after the paraphrase became events (verbs) which made the sentences easier to understand: The word *marble* was an *attribute*
(adjective), but after paraphrasing, it became a thing. The dome in the source text was an attribute, and it became a thing. This process is called nominalization.

Surface Structure
2. Entrusted to a board-of-architects by Emperor Shah Jahan, the construction of the Taj Complex began about 1631 AD.

Deep Structure
Emperor Shah Jahan hired the best architects to build the complex Taj in 1631 AD.

Commentary
- Complex words in the source text are replaced with more simple equivalents; entrusted to hired, board-of-architects to best.
- The word order on the surface structure has been slightly adjusted, known as Modulation, and Transposition.
- Shah Jahan became the agent in the deep structure: Reciprocal words & Modulation.
- Long propositional clusters (sentences) were divided into two or more propositions (clauses).
- Skewings were eliminated. For example, things (nouns) after the paraphrase became events (verbs), making the sentences easier to understand. The word construction was a thing, but then it became an event; to build. This process is called verbalization.

Surface Structure
3. The principal mausoleum was completed in 1648 AD by employing thousands of artisans and craftsmen, whereas the outlying buildings and gardens were finished five years later in 1653 AD.

Deep Structure
In 1648 AD Shah Jahan employed thousands of artisans and craftsmen to complete the central mausoleum. However, they finished the other buildings and gardens five years later, in 1653 AD.

Commentary
- Complex words in the source text are replaced with more simple synonyms: principal to central, outlying to other.
- The structure, the word order of the surface structure, has been slightly modified, called transposition & Modulation.
- Shah Jahan became the agent in the deep structure: Reciprocal Words & Modulation.
- Long propositional clusters (sentences) were divided into two or more propositions (clauses).
- The passive sentence became active. It is another type of Modulation.
- Skewings were eliminated. The word employing has become to employ. This process is called verbalization.
4. The Taj, the ultimate expression of love, speaks volumes of indulgence coming from an overflowing treasury and political security of that era and much more by way of the finesse in art and science of architecture.

**Deep Structure**

The king wanted to express his deep love (for his late wife) through the most beautiful building in the world, the Taj complex. He was able to achieve his goal because he flowed his treasure. Secondly, there was no political threat to the country, much more by way of the finesse in art and science of architecture.

**Commentary**

- In this part, complicated phrases in the surface structure are simplified. For example, volumes of indulgence are modified to the most beautiful building in the world.
- The long propositional cluster is divided into four propositions. The word order and structure of the propositions have slightly changed.
- Skewings are unskewed. The phrase expression of love became ‘to expresses a deep love’ after paraphrasing (verbalization). Overflowing treasury has been modified to flowed his treasure. Overflowing was an attribute that became an event to flow. In the second part, the treasury was a thing has been changed to the treasure.

**Conclusion**

This study provides a guide for puzzled translators, indicating clear steps of paraphrasing a challenging text prepared to be translated. Having explained the terms, skewing, and restatement as the initial steps of paraphrasing, we have shown how to handle skewings with examples. Synonyms, antonyms, substitute words, and reciprocal words have been explained as supplementary techniques of paraphrasing. We hope that this study might help a translator identify the difference between the grammatical categories and the semantic categories. This way, they can eliminate most of the skewing and make it easier to translate into a more verbal language. The skewing and all the complexities between grammar and semantics are eliminated in this method, and each concept is made obvious, bringing out the meaning.

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References
An Evaluation of English Department Coursebooks at Komar University: A Case Study

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Abstract
This research aims to give a clear image of coursebook evaluation in the English department of Komar University of Science and Technology (KUST) in Iraqi Kurdistan. The focus of this paper is to show the advantages and disadvantages of six coursebooks that are used in the English department of KUST. For this purpose, the researchers conducted interviews with the instructors and a survey with the students of these courses. These interviews and the survey show the good sides and the shortcomings of the studied coursebooks by asking different types of questions related to the contents of the books. The research took place in Fall-Winter 2019. The study results show that two-thirds of the teachers were satisfied with the coursebooks chosen to teach in the department of English to a large degree, and most of the students were satisfied with their coursebooks.

Keywords: coursebook, ELT, evaluation, interviews, Komar University, predictive evaluation, retrospective evaluation

Introduction

This research is to provide information and evaluation of the coursebooks that have been chosen by the instructors for the English language courses. The chosen coursebooks have been used for more than four years. The students have studied them and have done many tests in these coursebooks; however, there is no proven data to show these coursebooks’ significance.

Coursebooks are one of the most important guides for students during their learning process. Coursebooks open the door to more knowledge and more information. Additionally, students may find almost all the materials that have been required in a course syllabus. Therefore, it makes learning more accessible and more effective. Also, instructors choose coursebooks to follow the materials of the course outline in a productive way that makes the students arrange their studies and their knowledge according to the coursebook simultaneously. (Cunningsworth, 1995.)

The importance of this study is for the indication of how coursebooks are beneficial for instructors and students at the same time. However, it can be ineffective simultaneously, and this depends on the instructor’s choice.

The purpose of choosing Komar university is that most teachers are using coursebooks in English department, especially for linguistic courses. There are linguistic books that cannot be a helpful guide for students to find all of the course syllabus materials. For that reason, the results of this research will point out the useful and the useless coursebooks of the linguistic courses in this university.

The researchers attempt to discover answers for the following questions throughout this study:

- To what extent teachers think about students’ level when they choose the materials for them?
- To what extent English department students are satisfied with their studying materials?
- To what extent the linguistics coursebooks’ subjects are durable and contain various exercise?

This study aims to evaluate the coursebooks, whether they are useful or not. By the end of the research, coursebooks will be assessed of how helpful and beneficial they are during the courses for students and instructors at the same time. Some coursebooks provide more benefits than other coursebooks depending on the instructor’s choice of the option because of the way the teachers choose a coursebook.

Literature Review

The Role of Coursebooks in Language Teaching and Learning

Tomlinson (2011) defines materials and coursebooks as the tools which the instructors or learners use to help smooth learning of a language whereas materials development refers to anything that writers, teachers and learners do to provide sources of language input and exploit those sources in ways that maximize the likelihood of intake. Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p. 315) maintained “no teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook.” Sheldon (1988, p.237) claimed that coursebooks “represent the visible heart of any ELT program.”
Course-book Evaluation

There are numerous definitions and discussions from researchers with each making different claims about what course-book evaluation is. To begin, Grant (1987) stated that course-books open up suitable circumstances for students to acquire and practice the target language in an academic setting as an equivalent before going to real-life situations. This will ultimately help build an effective level of self-confidence in language learners as they can tell whether they are ready for real life or need more preparation to arrive at a level of satisfaction. Then, Richards and Rodgers (2001) asserted that course-books are one of the building blocks of the curriculum that is inevitable since they layout the content and outline the syllabus scope. That way, students and teachers have a system hands-on, which they can both agree on and that each can be used to arrive at their goals.

Approaches to Coursebook Evaluation

When the time comes for evaluating books, it needs time and effort to properly evaluate and an effective one. Hutchinson and Waters (1989) claimed that assessing a coursebook is done to know the good and bad sides of the book, criticizing the choice of the books chosen by a teacher. Choosing every book should go into good progress, the teachers should have all the knowledge about the book, be aware of the book contents to choose it for their courses. In order to evaluate a book, two main types of evaluation can be taken into considerations, and the types are predictive evaluation and retrospective evaluation. (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997). The four main types of evaluating, according to Cunningsworth and Ellis:

The Predictive Evaluation

Predictive evaluation is a type of evaluation concerned with the materials used by the teachers. When a teacher wants to decide on choosing a coursebook, they should first ask if that coursebook is available in their region or not. For this purpose, the teachers can look at other teachers’ or researchers’ evaluations of the books. Also, they can rely on others’ evaluations of that book which they want to use. It is not necessary to be academic people; they can look for ordinary people evaluations also. Some researchers have come up with some criteria for evaluating a book or choosing a suitable book (Cunningsworth, 1984). Therefore, while deciding on a book, the criteria for evaluating the books make it easier for the teachers to select them for their courses. The requirements include learners’ needs, matching the aim of the subject, and supporting the role of learning.

Retrospective Evaluation

This type of evaluation is different from the previous type; in this type, the evaluation will be on those books that have been used before. When a teacher wants to decide on a book, he or she will choose a book that has been used before, and how the book fulfills the learners needs, and the teacher decides whether the book will be used in the course that they teach or not, depending on the previous evaluation or use of the book. While teaching a course, the teacher will look at the material and the activities used in that course and decide at the end if it is good to be used again or not (Ellis, 1997). A way of carrying retrospective evaluation is by doing a micro evaluation. In micro evaluation, meaning is one of the most important points, and it evaluates the way the students react to the chosen book (Skehan, 1998).
Reasons for Coursebook Evaluation

When it comes to the reasons for evaluating a coursebook, it can be said that there are many reasons that a book needs to be evaluated. Coursebooks provide a good source for both learner and teacher while they use them (Richards, 1993). While evaluating a coursebook, we can know if that coursebook is good or bad for the course that is studying or is this coursebook suitable for that specific level of the course learners. For choosing a book, the teachers are responsible. They should choose a book that is evaluated before and decided to be a good and effective book to be used. Therefore, evaluating a coursebook is important to make the teacher's choice easier while deciding on a book for their subject and reaching the learner’s needs. The linguistics coursebooks in department of English in KUST should be evaluated to ensure their effectiveness from different perspectives.

Methods and Research Design

In this research, a survey and semi-structured interview were used to gather data from respondents. Brown and Rodgers (2002) claimed that “Surveys are any methods used to collect and identify the features, behaviors, beliefs, viewpoints, and so on of pupils, educators, supervisors, or any other individual of research interest” (p. 142).

The Context of the Study

English Department coursebooks of Komar University have been used for this study. The coursebooks are studied in several universities in Kurdistan, such as Komar University, Sulaimani University and Salahaddin University. Also, since the establishment of the English Department of Komar University in 2015, these coursebooks have been used. The coursebooks of the English department cover various elements of the spoken language. The coursebooks aim to explore the English language and literature and aim to develop writing, reading, and speaking abilities. These coursebooks have been used since 2015 and this study was conducted in 2019.

Participants

This study aims to reveal the usefulness of the coursebooks that are in use at the Komar University, for this purpose of coursebook evaluation, the selected participants are from the Komar University. Furthermore, for this process, a survey is conducted. The respondents in this sample consisted of teachers and students. The teachers are currently teaching linguistics courses and using the coursebooks and have been picked for this analysis. Some students have been randomly chosen and engaged in the report as they participated in the process of evaluating the coursebooks. The participants, as volunteers, agreed to participate in the procedures and signed a consent form. The number of participants was 50 students, 46 females and four males. Moreover, the number of English instructors who were interviewed was three teachers, two males and one female.

Furthermore, the instructors were from the English Department of the Komar University and two of them have PhD and one of them has a master’s degree in English language. The working experience of the instructors were various with an average of 9.5 years of experience as the participants’ experience was between seven to 12 years of experience. The age of the participants was between 19 to 25 years.
Research Instruments

In this research, the data collection is through some questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire is for the students and the interview is for the teachers.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this research is designed by Savaş (1998). The table taken from the questionnaire has been used as it is, without any change (Appendix A). No change was made in the questionnaire. This questionnaire is used in this research because it meets the research means for evaluation of the books. This questionnaire has been used in other studies as well. One example of research that used this questionnaire is the research of Serpil and Arda (2007). This questionnaire contains 30 questions, and the items are from different categories, there are four categories that the questions divided into, and they are (layout and physical make-up, subject matter, vocabulary and structure, exercise, and activity). And the scale of the questions is from strongly disagree to agree strongly.

The Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview was adapted from Erturk (2013), in his MA research. Some words in the questions were changed to suit the research topic and need (Appendix B). The semi-structured interview was used to give the interviewer an open conversation, and a new idea can be included from the teachers' answer. Most of the questions that set for the teachers were related to the questionnaire given to the students. The teachers were asked ten questions. And the questions were about the aims of the coursebook, the example of authentic language in the coursebook, flexibility of the coursebook, using the four skills in the coursebook, the activities, interacting for using English, revision activities, vocabulary level and finally their overall opinion about the coursebook.

Data Analysis

Since no specific data analyzing tool has been used such as the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). A manual analysis of data has been conducted for both the questionnaires and interviews. The reason for the manual approach is that there are not as many students necessitating digital or computerized approaches. For the teacher interview questions part, the selected teachers are voice-recorded during the interview. After that, the speech is converted to text ending up with a transcript. However, where more clarifications are needed, more explanations are given. To a large degree, most of what the teacher has said in the interview is relevant and consistent with the objectives of the research paper is used as a quote from the teacher. Then similarities and differences between different teachers as well as similarities and differences among various courses that the same teacher teaches.

The Questionnaire Results

Table 1. The first data collection table is for the Syntax class or coursebook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire’s category</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Layout &amp; Physical Make-up</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subject Matter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vocabulary &amp; Structure</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exercises &amp; Activities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first category is the layout and physical make-up of the coursebook. And this category includes nine questions that are about (the look, the cover, the size, the contents, the understanding, design, colors, headings, same format) of the coursebook. A total of 19 answers are strongly disagree or disagree with the question in this category. 29 answers are feeling neutral with the question, and most of the answers are 33 answers, which agree or strongly agree with the questions in this category. The second category is Subject Matter. This category includes three questions which are about (the topics, the ordering of topics, level). Three answers are strongly disagreed or disagree with the questions in this category. Seven answers are feeling neutral and 17 answers are strongly agreed or agree with the question, which is the highest range of answers. The third category is Vocabulary & Structure. In this category, the total of 19 answers strongly disagree or disagree with the questions. 27 of the answers feel neutral, and five answers strongly agree or agree with all the questions relating to the coursebook in syntax. The fourth and last category is about the Exercise and Activity of the coursebook. In this part, there are nine questions. In these nine questions, a total of 14 students strongly disagree or disagree about the question relating to their coursebook. 22 answers say neutral, and most of the students' answers, which are 45 answers strongly agree or agree with the questions.

Table 2. The second class or coursebook evaluation is Phonetics class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire’s category</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Layout &amp; Physical Make-up</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subject Matter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vocabulary and Structure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exercises and Activates</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second evaluation is the phonetics coursebook. In the first category, the number of answers which disagree or strongly disagree is six. A total of eight answers state neutral about the question. And 26 answers, which are most of the answer strongly agree or agree with the questions in the layout and physical make-up category. The second category which is subject matter three answers disagree; only one of the answers is neutral. And 11 answers strongly agree or agree with the questions. In the third category, which is vocabulary and structure, five of the answers disagree or strongly disagree with the question. Eight of the answers are neutral. And 32 of the answers, which is again the majority strongly agree or agree with the question. And for the last category, which is the exercise and activity related to the coursebook they are studying. Only five answers strongly disagree or disagree with it. And eight of the answers feel neutral. Other answers, which are 32 answers strongly agree or agree with the questions.

Table 3. The third class or coursebook evaluation is Introduction to Language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire’s category</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Layout &amp; Physical Make-up</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subject Matter</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vocabulary and Structure</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exercises and Activates</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the introduction to language class, the questionnaires are given to the students. And the result of the answering are as follows. In the first category, 20 answers strongly disagree or disagree with the questions. And twenty six answers feel neutral. And 26 answers strongly agree
or agree with the questions. For the second category, only seven answers strongly disagree or disagree with the questions about their coursebook. Eight is neutral. And nine of the answers strongly agree or agree with the question. The third category, which is about vocabulary and structure, 19 answers disagree or strongly disagree. And 31 of the answer, which is the majority feel neutral with the questions about their coursebook. And 22 of the answers strongly agree or agree. For the last category, the majority, which is 31 answers strongly disagree or disagree with the questions related to the coursebook. And 23 of the answers feel neutral. Also, 18 answer, which is the fewer answers strongly agree or agree with the question.

Table 4. The fourth class or coursebook is Translation I class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire’s category</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Layout &amp; Physical Make-up</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subject Matter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vocabulary and Structure</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exercises and Activates</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result of the translation class or coursebook evaluation is as follows. For the first categories, 32 answers strongly disagree or disagree with the question related to their coursebook. And 24 answers feel neutral. The 16 other answers strongly agree or agree with the questions. For the second category, the number of answers to strongly disagree or disagree and neutral are the same, which is 10 answers. And for strongly agree or agree the number of answers is only four answers. And for the third category 26 answers strongly disagree or disagree. 33 answers feel neutral. And 13 answers strongly agree or agree with the question related to their coursebook that they are using. In the last category 21 answers strongly disagree or disagree, 23 feel neutral. And 28 answers strongly agree or agree with the questions related to their coursebook.

Table 5. The fifth class or coursebook is Grammar III class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire’s category</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Layout &amp; Physical Make-up</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subject Matter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vocabulary and Structure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exercises and Activates</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the class of Grammar III, the answers of the students were as follows. For the first category, a total of 13 answers strongly disagree or disagree with the question in this category. Also, 17 answers say the questions are neutral. And most of the answers with 42 answers strongly agree or agree with the question. For the second category, only three answers strongly disagree or disagree with the question relating to their coursebook. And five answers say it is neutral. For the remaining answers, which is 16 answers strongly agree or agree with the question. In the third category, only six answers strongly disagree or disagree. 24 answers feel it is neutral. And 42 answers strongly agree or agree. And for the last category seven answers strongly disagree or disagree. And 15 answers say neutral. To strongly agree or agree, there are 50 answers, which are most of the answers to the students.
Table 6. The sixth and last class or coursebook is Introduction to Linguistics class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire’s category</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Layout &amp; Physical Make-up</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subject Matter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vocabulary and Structure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exercises and Activates</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And for the last class, which is the introduction to the linguistics class, the answers are as follows. For the first category eight answers strongly disagree or disagree with the questions. 20 answers feel neutral. And 26 answers strongly agree or agree with the question related to their coursebook. In the second category of the questions, only one answer strongly disagree or disagree with the questions. Five answers feel neutral. And 12 answers strongly agree or agree with the questions. In the third category again, one answer strongly disagree or disagree. 27 answers feel neutral. And 26 of the answers strongly agree or agree with the question. And for the last category, eight answers strongly disagree or disagree. And 20 answers feel neutral with the question. And 26 answers were for the strongly agree or agree with the questions related to their coursebook they are studying in the introduction to linguistics.

The result of semi-structured interviews

The teacher interview questions comprise of ten questions covering different areas of the evaluation. There are six courses in Komar University Language Program being taught by three teachers. Some teachers teach more than one course. However, their teaching style and nature of the course have led to the fact that they shall share almost the same answer for all the courses they teach. If the teacher has given a specific answer for one course and a different answer for another, it will be highlighted and mentioned.

Question one is (Do the aims of the coursebook correspond closely with aims in the teaching program?) All three teachers responded positively. They all believe that the aims of coursebooks in all six courses are consistent with the aims set for the teaching program.

Teacher one (T1) stated, “I think that the aim of the coursebook and the major outcomes of course book match each other, and this is manifested on the level of three courses.” T1 is teaching Intro to Linguistics and Intro to Language. Her answer applies to both primary coursebooks of the course. T2 said, “Yes, they have to like coursebook, and the aim should be reflecting one another usually, you have to specify your aims, and based on your aims, you design the coursebook.”

Question two is (Do the aims of the coursebook correspond closely with the needs of learners?) T1’s view on the matter was when you see the need of the learner is the concept of the whole might be kind of tricky to define because when you say the need of learner if you mean on the low rank, for example, it comes to matters of how they can make you solve this coursebook later on when they graduate. It may be somehow challenging to link between the learner’s needs and the coursebook. But if you linked to the learners need in the English department, so yes, basically having an introduction to language serves the purpose of having an introduction to
linguistics then you go to phonetics as one level of linguistic analysis and then you go to upper level of analysis in this case yes of course the course books are closely related to them.

Then T3 said, “Actually we had a good change by the doctor who became the head of the department. He searched a lot and rearranged the courses in the English department. One of the aspects taken into consideration was the needs of learners.” T3 explained that they specialized the courses to suit the needs of students in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI). T3 also said, “That is why we tried to adopt the students' needs and improve the skills to find jobs in the market.”

Question three is (Does the coursebook include examples of authentic language and materials?) All three teachers responded positively to this question. T1 said, “Yes, of course especially in the case of these courses, most of the material used in the language is authentic because we usually rely on the textbooks, authors, or sometimes of the explanation of the authors. Most of the time and when we explain the different notions related to each of these fields, we rely on bringing quotations from original sources, for example, Chomsky’ s books, or somebody whose writing on Chomsky so yes the material used is authentic. T3 said “If you mean today’s language that is spoken by most of the world’s speakers, scholars, scientists, researchers, etc. yes, we do.”

Question four is (Is the coursebook flexible? Does it allow different teaching and learning styles?) In terms of teaching and learning styles, both T1 and T2 without hesitation responded positively. T2 said, “Yes, it is one of the perfect characteristics coursebook should be flexible enough that different people will learn from not only adapted one on one style or type of teaching. So, my coursebook is pretty much flexible.”

T3 responded somewhat differently due to the nature of his courses. For his grammar course, he said “…for grammar, I only depend on one specific coursebook. I have, for each syllabus, two to three coursebooks. One is the primary and the other ones are secondary. The chapters of the book, the primary one, should be studied. There is no flexibility in the sense of aim for you to choose or not to choose. Then the textbook forces me to use papers, websites, read other books, even go to the other classes, etc. And for using different teaching and learning styles, yes. Every coursebook can be used academically because they are written academically.

Question five is (Are all four skills (Speaking, listening, reading, writing) adequately covered at an appropriate level?) For this question, T1 was strongly positive. She said “Of course, yes, the type of activity that is covered in the classes allows and force such variety because sometimes students engage in some sort of discussions sometimes, they write reports, they listen, and they have to read for the classes and the reports.”

Then T2 and T3 explained that depending because of the curriculum, and they may not be able to cover all four skills simultaneously through the same coursebook. T2 said “It is very difficult to focus on all the forms depending on the coursebook because for some courses you have a lot of speaking and some reading, but for some other courses have reading and writing.

T3 had two different answers per course he teaches. For his grammar course, he said, “If adequately means equally, I can’t say equally because it depends. Since in grammar 3, to some
degree, they are used, but I cannot say either they are used equally or appropriately to the same level. In grammar, it is more speaking and clarification rather than writing. It is not like other courses.” Similarly, for his Translation course, he said, “Actually, because this coursebook is the translation, then we don’t have a lot of listening. And as well, this coursebook does not teach interpretation. It teaches translation actually.” Thus, it is entirely dependent on the curriculum.

Question six is (Do the listening and speaking activities help students improve their communicative skills?) Here, T1 and T3 are, to a large extent, similarly responded negatively claiming that it is not entirely possible that their coursebooks, due to the nature of the subject, help improve communicative skills.

T2, however, though it is otherwise possible to improve communicative skills through what coursebook he uses in his classroom. He said, “Yes, pretty much they have to because once students listen and they speak, they are establishing communication so they will help students’ communicative skills.”

Question seven is (What opportunities exist for students to interact using English?) All three teachers happen to believe that there are plenty of opportunities for students to practice pure English. T1 said of course, all the opportunities of interaction are available in these classes because these are theoretical classes. The major point that we discuss in any of them is the point that is the subject of some discussion on reasoning. All the discussions that the students do are in the English language, Kurdish language is not allowed in classes except in Introduction to Language because it is new to the students sometimes, they may not understand a specific term or a terminology.

Then T2 said, “…inside the class would be an ideal place that students can use English properly inside the class if they want to talk and use the language properly inside the class, they have a lot of opportunities. And outside the class, it is very difficult to practice English.”

Question eight is (Are there enough recycling and revision activities?) For this question too, all teachers are united in believing that there are plenty of revision exercises. T2 said “Yes, it is very important to make sure that students how to learn what teachers have taught they have to have some revision activities they have to like revise and reflect what they have learned.”

After that, T3 said, “Yes, every time we start a class, we need to go back to the first class or the previous one, and then at the end, we need to revise. And the same thing in the coursebook.” He went on to state that it includes revision of exercises and activities.

Question nine is (Is the vocabulary load of the units consistent with students’ levels?) When it comes to vocabulary, T1 had some concern on the super list of terminologies assigned to students during the semester. she said “…for example for Linguistics and Phonetics, students are already familiar with the topics or terminology, but for Introduction to Language, this actually should be the case because the topics and the trend and the type of the class I mean theoretical class on linguistics as an academic discipline is new to the students. So, it is normal. […] The only concern I have is in Linguistics because the load of the terminologies presented throughout the course is too much.
T2 and T3, on the contrary, somewhat agreed that the vocabulary set used in the coursebooks are at an adequate level to the learners. T2 said, “Sometimes they are challenging vocabularies, but teacher’s job is to simplify them and make sure that the students learn the vocabularies.” Then T3 said, “Yes, because mostly these books are chosen, like this one I use in Grammar III, are for students. They are not for highly ranked academic and professional people and professors to depend on.”

Finally, question ten is (What is your overall opinion about the coursebook you have been using?) Teachers’ opinions varied based on the courses they teach. T1 said I think the course book for Phonetics and Linguistics so far I do not have any complaints about the coursebooks, I think they are reflecting the total materials that should be covered in the courses through when you take a look at the coursebook of Linguistics you see that it is a little bit crowded because it contains lots of terminologies and it might be some kind of a lot to the students, but still the coursebook meets the end of the class.

Then T2 said “Actually, the coursebook is essential because it is a road map, it is what teachers follow for the course but more importantly it is the implementation of how you practice what the content of the course book that is very important than the actual course book. The course books are essential to have because they show that you organize and you have a plan, but the most important thing is to follow the course books.”

After that, T3 gave two different opinions per each course he teaches. For his grammar coursebook, he said, “I can say it is beneficial, but it becomes more beneficial by using other materials, and the coursebook studied should be paving the way for the other sources and coursebook to be used by students. This coursebook is not giving the last or ultimate answer to the student; it is a kind of a door opened for students to search for more information.” And for his Translation course, he said, the coursebook I have been using, I can’t say it is a good one. As for myself, I was not very interested in the coursebook, and I couldn’t make a change in the coursebook because I didn’t have that much time to make a change in the syllabus. Still, if I am going to teach next time, I will change it to remove that much theoretical or historical background about translation. I will dedicate it more for application and practical things in the classroom.

Discussion of the Results
To what extent teachers think about student’s level when they choose materials for them?

When interviewing teachers at Komar University, it appeared that the teachers consider students’ level to the extent that course-books fulfill the needs of learners in that specific class or semester in the English department. Teachers think that even though students may face difficulties in handling the load of material they are assigned, the teacher’s job is to make sure students can comprehend the subject matter, such vocabularies and grammatical topics. In the end, teachers seemed that they are setting standards for students to be able to achieve to guarantee that learners progress with teachers’ expectations and that they are ready to take on more advanced content.

One teacher stated that it might be the case that students, from time to time, find certain classes, textbooks, etc. However, in the end, it is the teacher’s job to offer help, provide
An Evaluation of English Department Coursebooks at Komar

Saeed, Sabir & Fatah

guidelines, and it makes easier for students to comprehend the subject matter. Numerous studies are claiming that it is almost impossible to find the perfect textbook that ultimately fulfills all the needs of learners. Erturk (2013) has conducted an evaluation on “Unique 6” what is presently the coursebook of grade six ELT students. He believes the coursebook does not have inspiring and interesting material to offer, and he concludes that the level of disagreement from teachers reaches its highest in a way that 75% of teachers would rather not use the coursebook next time they teach English as a foreign language. Serpil and Arda (2007) have done another research on analyzing “Let's Speak English 7” which is another EFL coursebook studied in grade seven. They deduced that although it could be effective if taught by expert teachers, the coursebook cannot be entirely suggested as the main source of study for teaching English in primary schools. If it is still used, it is recommended that the teachers put a great deal of effort into making adaptations to extract the most demanding and interesting materials and put it into proper contexts in the classroom.

To what extent English department students satisfied with their studying materials?

From the results of the questionnaire's part of the study, students have different ideas about their coursebook. The survey results in this research show that most of the students are satisfied with their coursebook. In most of the classes, the results for all the categories are positive, and the students feel good studying their coursebook. But except for one class, almost all the students do not feel good of their coursebook, and that class is "Translation" class.

In translation class, the student's answers are more strongly disagree than agree, in all the categories in the questionnaire, which is 30 questions, the total of all the students answer for all questions are 68 answers strongly disagree. This number is huge compared to other classes. Therefore, as the teacher of the "Translation" class, he claims that this book is not perfect; the students as well do not feel good studying this book in their "Translation" course. But for the rest of the five other coursebooks, generally, most of the students feel good or satisfied studying their coursebook, and they think they are getting new information or ideas.

Different from this research result, some studies have a different opinion about their coursebook. Yakhontova (2001) did a study at his university, and the study was about a book study at a Ukranian university. As a result, he found out most of the students feel happy with the book, and they suggest this book should be studied by other students as well. But in Zohrabî's (2010) research, he worked on a book named "Reading English in Action" at Tabriz university. He found out the students are not satisfied with the book, and they feel the reading part of the book is boring, and they need more communication and speaking part to be included in their coursebook.

To what extent the coursebooks' subjects are durable and contain various exercises?

Some points about the coursebook durability and the exercises are shown from both the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. First, for answering the question that says if the coursebook subject is durable or not, most of the students from the six courses strongly agree. They all see that their coursebook's subjects are durable and easy to understand, except for one course.
In the "Translation" class, the students feel the subjects are hard to understand. And for the exercise question part, it is also said by almost all the students that the exercise part has various types of exercises and all types of skills, like listening, speaking, reading and writing exercises. But students in "Introduction to Language" disagree with the exercise part of their book. They say their book does not have various exercises that they get to benefit from it. But mostly both the durability and exercise part of the coursebook of these six classes at Komar University are counted to be good and beneficial.

In Uyar (2014), in his research with some other teacher at Zirva university gets to a conclusion. He found out that the students in his university that he taught are not feeling good about their coursebook. From their survey results, he found out the weak points about the book are more than the strong point. And as a conclusion, they agreed to improve the weak points into strong ones, in order for the students to find the book durable and get various exercises to learn.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to find the advantages and the disadvantages of six coursebooks which have been used in the department of English of KUST since 2015. The results of the study show that two-thirds of the teachers were satisfied with the coursebooks chosen to teach in the English department to a large degree, and most of the students are satisfied with their coursebooks. However, it was noted that here and there, some teachers were not satisfied with the coursebook as well as some students, they were claiming that they were not going to use it again in the future classes but rather choose another one. Some teachers disagreed that the coursebook shall be studied as the primary textbook. Therefore, They suggested that the textbook should be integrated with other materials to fulfill the ultimate needs of learners. However, Some teachers suggested that only very up-to-date coursebooks are used and discard slightly aging textbooks. This will ensure the contents are inspiring and interesting and relevant for learners. Overall, most teachers agreed that a large percentage of the chosen coursebooks are effective and fulfill most of the students' needs. The students also agreed with the coursebook and they feel they learn. Yet again, they concluded that a textbook should not meet every necessity of learners, to make the students search for more information besides their books, but the integration of textbooks and other relevant materials will do.

About the authors
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References
Appendices

Appendix A: STUDENT’S QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the questions below. Indicate your answer with a TICK.

1. Sex
   Male…………. Female…………

2. Class: ………

0 = Strongly disagree   1 = Disagree   2 = Natural   3 = Agree   4 = Atrongly agree

1. LAYOUT & PHYSICAL MAKE-UP

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The look of the coursebook is attractive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The cover of the coursebook is durable.</td>
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<td>3. The size of the coursebook seems convenient for me to handle.</td>
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<td>4. The coursebook contains enough pictures, diagrams, tables etc.</td>
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<td>helping me understand the printed text.</td>
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<td>5. I can understand the illustrations easily.</td>
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<td>6. There is a variety of design to interest me.</td>
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<td>7. The use of color affects my learning in a positive way.</td>
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<td>8. The main headings and subheadings in the coursebook are well-</td>
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<td>organized.</td>
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<td>9. The coursebook follows the same format in each unit</td>
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2. SUBJECT MATTER

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<tr>
<td>10. The topics of the units are interesting for me.</td>
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<td>11. The ordering of the topics of the units affects my learning in a</td>
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<td>positive way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The coursebook is appropriate for my level.</td>
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3. VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURE

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<tr>
<td>13. There is an even distribution of grammatical and vocabulary</td>
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<td>items among the units.</td>
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<td>14. The grammatical and vocabulary items are introduced in a</td>
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<td>meaningful context.</td>
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<td>15. The number of grammatical points is appropriate for my level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. The sequence of grammatical points affects my learning in a</td>
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<td>positive way.</td>
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<td>17. The new structure is repeated in subsequent lessons for</td>
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<td>reinforcement.</td>
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<td>18. The presentations of new structure are clear and complete</td>
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<td>enough.</td>
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</table>
19. The vocabulary load seems to be reasonable for me.
20. The new vocabulary is repeated in subsequent lessons for reinforcement.
21. The new vocabulary is integrated in varying contexts and situations.

### 4. EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES

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<td>22. There are a variety of activities in the coursebook.</td>
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<td>23. The instructions to the activities are clear and appropriate for me.</td>
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<td>24. The activities match my level in general.</td>
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<td>25. The activities help me to understand the topic better.</td>
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<td>26. The writing activities are adequate.</td>
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<td>27. The speaking activities are adequate.</td>
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<td>28. The listening activities are adequate.</td>
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<td>29. The reading activities are adequate.</td>
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<td>30. The language activities are adequate.</td>
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This questionnaire is designed by (Savaş 1998)

### Appendix B: Semi-Structured interview questions for teachers

1. Do the aims of the course book correspond closely with the aims in the teaching program?
2. Do the aims of the course book correspond closely with the needs of learners?
3. Does the course include examples of authentic language and materials?
4. Is the course book flexible? Does it allow different teaching and learning styles?
5. Are all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) adequately covered at an appropriate level?
6. Do the listening and speaking activities help students improve their communicative skills?
7. What opportunities exist for students to interact using English?
8. Are there enough recycling and revision activities?
9. Is the vocabulary load of the units consistent with students” levels?
10. What is your overall opinion about the course book you have been using?

These questions are designed by (Hilal Erturk 2013)
Involvement in Extracurricular Activities and Overcoming High Levels of Communication Apprehension among Saudi EFL Majors

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Abstract
This study attempted to examine the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and levels of Communication Apprehension (CA) among English as a foreign language (EFL) students and explore the students’ perspectives of how extracurricular activities affect their communication skills. The study addressed the following two questions: a) what is the relationship between EFL students' involvement in extracurricular activities and their level of Communication Apprehension?, b) What are the EFL students' perspectives regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on their communication skills?. The participants were 40 EFL students among 80 who participated in extracurricular activities at the College of Languages and Translation at Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. The participants were asked to complete a Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) to examine their levels of CA as well as a questionnaire about their attitudes toward extracurricular activities. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 participants to explore their perspectives in depth. The findings showed that most participants had moderate levels of CA and that 100% of the participants agreed that participation in extracurricular activities helped them reduce CA and improve their communication skills. The study also showed that extracurricular activities were more helpful than classroom activities in improving communication skills. This study is significant in that it shed the light on the importance of involvement in extracurricular activities and their role in improving EFL students’ communication skills and lowering CA levels. Thus, it is recommended to encourage EFL students to participate in extracurricular activities and consider including such activities in course requirements and teaching materials.

Keywords: communication apprehension, communication skills, extracurricular activities, Saudi EFL majors

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Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language is not without challenges, as it involves developing a target language without full exposure to it outside the classroom. Researchers have always asserted that communication in the target language helps EFL learners improve their language and leads to educational and academic achievements. Rubin, Graham, and Mignerey (1990) strongly agreed that college success is highly correlated to students’ communication skills. However, many EFL learners are restricted to classroom learning environments that do not always offer ample opportunities to communicate and interact via the target language in a way that resembles real-life situations and satisfies basic needs. In such cases, EFL learners usually learn the language within classroom boundaries, particularly in traditional learning classes, where the teacher takes the dominant role and students are mostly passive recipients of information. Chen and Wang (2013) stated that students in traditional teaching classes are restricted to formal settings that reduce students' interaction and create more passive students.

Learning a foreign language in such a traditional learning situation may lead to higher levels of Communication Apprehension (CA) which might constitute a barrier to learning. It has always been argued that most people experience some levels of CA and that, as claimed by Bragg (2017), “between 30% and 40% of individuals are estimated to experience high levels of CA” (p. 2). Nevertheless, it is highly important to create a rich environment of communication for EFL students through which they can improve their communication skills and lower their levels of CA. Extracurricular activities can provide such environments, allowing students to find different ways of interaction to improve their communication skills and overcome high levels of CA. It has also been argued that students can enhance their subject knowledge, professional development skills, and communication skills through extracurricular activities (Malinovska, 2011).

In the College of Languages and Translation at Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, some students like to participate in various extracurricular activities and perform various tasks. Those students usually believe in the importance of such activities in improving language and communication skills. On the other hand, some students do not see the importance of extracurricular activities, not only viewing extracurricular activities as unimportant, but believing that such activities consume too much time and effort without benefitting the learning process. Therefore, teachers should consider such differences among students and find opportunities for them to improve communication skills and strengthen their capabilities of building good interpersonal skills among their peers. Teachers should also attract students and motivate them to participate by “advertising a range of extracurricular activities” (Makarova & Reva, 2017, p.44).

Tchibozo (2007) believed that extracurricular activities create a variety of dimensions in college students’ experiences and can emphasize the purpose of higher education. This paper is an attempt to examine the relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and EFL students’ CA levels. Additionally, the study intend to explore students’ perspectives regarding the effect of participation in extracurricular on their communication skills.

It has been claimed that all individuals experience some level of fear of public and interpersonal speaking, accompanied by feelings of anxiety and nervousness (Bodie, 2010).
However, such fears may hinder students’ progress and constitute an obstacle that prevents students from reaching higher levels of language proficiency. LeFebvre, LeFebvre, and Allen (2018) stated that “Fear and anxiety are potentially critical barriers to students’ learning and success” (p.2). This indicates a need to engage students in a variety of tasks that can help them overcome such fears. Participating in extracurricular activities can be a good way to help students overcome their communication fears and reduce high levels of CA. It has been strongly argued that involvement in extracurricular activities is not less important than attending regular classes (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Mahoney, Beverley, & Thomas, 2003).

As an assistant professor at the College of Languages and Translation at Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, I have observed that many students are not active in class. Those students rarely participate in class discussions and do not like to answer questions or speak in front of their peers. They also try to avoid working in groups or interacting with other students, preferring to work individually. However, those students perform better on written exams compared to their oral performance. This means that the desire not to participate might not be due to a lack of knowledge but to high levels of CA.

Hence, This study was intended to examine the relationship between the involvement of EFL students in extracurricular activities and levels of CA among participants at the College of Languages and Translation at Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. Moreover, the study was intended to explore students’ perspectives of how extracurricular activities affect their communication skills. The researcher intend to help EFL students improve their communication skills and reduce levels of CA in a more enjoyable and beneficial way through participating in extracurricular activities and develop as an EFL teacher and the head of the extracurricular activity unit.

The results of this study can shed the light on the importance of involvement in extracurricular activities and the role that such activities can play in improving EFL students’ communication skills and lowering CA levels. Additionally, the study can show how students perceive the effect of extracurricular activities on their communication skills in a way that can make such activities more helpful and effective to accomplish their goals.

The questions of the present study are formulated as follows:

1- What is the relationship between EFL students’ involvement in extracurricular activities and their level of CA?
2- What are the EFL students’ perspectives regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on their communication skills?

The main objectives of this research are to study the relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and EFL students’ level of CA and examine the students' perspectives regarding the effect of such activities in a way that helps in understanding these effects and considering the contribution that they may offer in the development of EFL students communication skills.

**Literature Review**

CA is defined as the level of anxiety or fear that an individual faces during communication, whether anticipated or real, with others (McCroskey, 1982; 1984). Payton and
Scott (2013) added that CA is “a social anxiety disorder and, in its extreme form, is considered a social phobia” (p.2). CA and the associated feelings of fear and anxiety have been rich areas of investigation throughout the decades, attracting the attention of researchers in various fields (Byrne, Flood, & Shanahan, 2012; McCroskey, 2009; McCroskey, Teven, Minielli, & Richmond McCroskey, 2014). The effect of CA on students has been emphasized in research because CA levels are highly associated with students’ academic achievements. McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, and Payne (1989) argued that “academically, we would expect lower grade point averages and higher dropout rates among high CA students compared to those with low CA” (p.101). This might be attributed to the fact that higher levels of CA usually elicit anxiety and feelings of stress, discomfort, and unwillingness to participate in communicative situations among students, which in turn “leads to avoidance behaviors, cognitive deficits, and performance failures” (p.101). Students with higher levels of CA will try to avoid any task that requires interaction and communication in academic situations, which usually results in an ineffective way of remembering course content (Freimuth, 1976).

In a qualitative study to explore the phenomenon of CA among students with high levels of CA, Bragg (2017) found that teaching materials do not provide enough opportunities for oral presentation or techniques that help students improve their communication skills. Bragg also found that students with high levels of CA have the same fears and anxiety inside and outside the classroom. CA was also examined in college students from a different angle. Payton and Scott (2013) conducted a study to evaluate whether homeschooled students have higher levels of CA than peers from public and private high schools. To answer this question, they examined levels of CA of college freshmen at four universities in the United States, and the results showed no significance difference between the three groups in their levels of CA.

Foreign or second language teachers should deal with CA carefully as students with higher levels of CA are expected to be more anxious when communicating in the foreign language and taking on the burden of communication using a language other than their mother tongue (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Mahdi (2015) studied the relationship between CA and communicative competence in EFL learners. He found that students face anxiety, stress, and fear that constitute an obstacle to learning and prevent them from interaction. The study also showed that EFL teachers can play a vital role in overcoming these communication difficulties by motivating students to participate in activities. Mahdi suggested some strategies for oral communication and designing EFL curriculum according to the students’ background. Mustapha, Ismail, Singh, and Elias (2010) examined CA levels among 50 EFL seniors at the bachelor level in a business administration program, focusing on the types of English language activities that students preferred. The findings showed that the students had moderately high levels of CA and preferred participating in group discussions to help reduce their anxiety.

Involvement in extracurricular activities can allow foreign or second language learners to find a range of opportunities to communicate using the target language (Mahdi, 2015). Extracurricular activities refer to any type of activity that is outside the course curricula. What is interesting about extracurricular activities is that participation is not obligatory, and students do not receive extra academic credit for participation. It is totally voluntary (Makarova & Reva, 2017). Thus, students who join these activities have the desire to participate and show their talents. Extracurricular activities offer a kind of communication that is more relaxed and flexible,
without classroom restrictions and the fear of being graded that many students may suffer from. Olibie and Ifeoma (2015) highly recommended that students be provided ample opportunities for meaningful participation in institution-facilitated extracurricular activities within the community.

In recent decades, there has been a noticeable shift in educational practices that placed much attention on extracurricular activities as a source of additional benefits for students (Malinovska, 2011). Montelongo (2002) believes that “A variety of student development changes in regards to cognitive and affective growth are associated with participation in college extracurricular activities” (p. 50). Some researchers believe that extracurricular activities do not need teacher organization or supervision (Eccles et al., 2003). Others argue that extracurricular activities should be performed under careful supervision by teachers and educators in a way that emphasizes communication and leadership skills in addition to positive proficiency developments for the students. (Simoncini & Caltabiono, 2012).

The effect of extracurricular activities on students’ communication skills has received a considerable amount of researchers’ attention. Jamal (2012) investigated the effect of participating in extracurricular activities on interpersonal skills and professional behaviors from the perspectives of undergraduate medical students. The study also involved the factors that can help in developing extracurricular activities and facilitating students’ participation. The researcher used semi-structured interviews with nine students who participated in extracurricular activities at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, KSA. The results showed that the participants gained many communication and interpersonal skills, such as problem solving, teamwork, leadership, and self-reflection skills, which positively influenced their academic achievements.

Tchibozo (2007) examined the effects of extracurricular activities on graduates’ communication skills and the transitional process from higher education to the labor market using a survey of 119 graduates in the UK who participated in extracurricular activities at their universities. The results of the study showed that involvement in extracurricular activities had a significant influence on the transition process, and Tchibozo suggested some strategies related to extracurricular activities to support the transition to work. Makarova and Reva (2017) studied the effect of participation in extracurricular activities on foreign language university students in Canada and Russia. The results showed that only about one-third of the students in these two countries had participated in extracurricular activities and that Canadian students usually participated in activities inside their universities, while Russian students participated in activities outside their universities. Most participants believed that participating in extracurricular activities helped them improve their communication and language skills, and they all agreed that trips abroad were the most effective activities.

de Prada Creo, Mareque, and Portela-Pino, (2020) investigated the effect of extracurricular activities on university students' skills of teamwork and found that there was a significant correlation between extracurricular activities and students' acquisition of communication skills and essential team work skills. Saibovich (2019) examined the relationship between extracurricular activities and university students' academic achievements, development of skills, and the role of parents in shaping students interest in such activities. The study showed that there was a positive direct and indirect influence of extracurricular activities on students' academic achievements and the development of flexible communication skills. Nghia, T. L. H.
(2017). Studied the influence of extracurricular activities on developing generic skills of university students and the contributing factors that affect the development of these skills through extracurricular activities. The study showed that there was a lack of autonomy in university curriculum that could be achieved through extracurricular activities which proved to be successful in developing the students’ generic skills.

In spite of the fact that many research has been done to examine the relation between participating in extracurricular activities and students' communication skills, examining the effect of such activities on EFL students' levels of CA and their perspectives is not given enough attention which constitutes a literary gap. This study examined the correlation between participation in extracurricular activities and EFL students’ levels of CA. It also represents an exploration of students’ perspectives regarding the effects of participation in extracurricular activities on their communication skills.

Methods

Research Design
This study involved a mixed-approach design, using both quantitative and qualitative measures to accomplish the research goal. The PRCA-24 developed by McCroskey was used in this study to measure the participants’ level of CA. (See Appendix A). Details on the PRCA-24 will be given later. A questionnaire was also used to gain a general overview of the participants’ attitudes toward the effect of extracurricular activities on communication skills (See Appendix B). Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the participants’ perceptions of how extracurricular activities affect the students’ communication skills in depth (See Appendix C). Quantitative statistical analysis was used to examine the correlation between participation in extracurricular activities and the participants’ level of CA. Qualitative analysis was used to explore the students’ perceptions.

Participants
The researcher is the head of the extracurricular activity unit at the college, which enabled her to provide accurate information about the unit. At the beginning of each semester, all students at the College of Languages and Translation at Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh are invited to join the unit through the unit’s Twitter account and manual registration; however, not all students join. The total number of students at the college is around 2,600, but only about 80 students participate in extracurricular activities around (3.07%) of the total number of students. Most members of the unit are participants from previous semesters and very few new participants.

The sampling technique followed in this study is purposive sampling based on the characteristics of the sample that help in achieving the objectives of the study. Non-probability sampling method was used because not all students in the college were given the opportunity to participate. The sample of this study was 40 students among the 80 who participate in extracurricular activities at the college; hence, the sample comprises 50% of the population. The participants come from various study levels at the college: 12 students from level eight, 11 from level seven, four from level six, seven from level five, three from level four, two from level three, and one student from level one. The participants worked on different types of extracurricular activities and performed a variety of roles in such activities.
Research Instrument

This study was intended to examine the correlation between participation in extracurricular activities and EFL students’ CA level as well as the students’ perspectives of how such activities affect their communication skills. To achieve these goals, three instruments were used: PRCA-24, a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews.

PRCA-24

McCroskey’s PRCA-24 consists of 24 items measuring four contexts of communication: group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking. For each context, six statements are used to measure CA via three positively-worded statements and three negatively-worded ones to reduce bias. The tool includes a Likert-type five-point scale, and the respondents chose whether they strongly agree, agree, are undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree.

The scoring formula for the PRCA-24 involves adding or subtracting the value of each statement within each group of six statements from a base score of 18. The result of this calculation is the sub-score of CA for each of the four communication contexts. Adding the sub-scores of all four contexts gives the total CA score, which can range from 24-120. Scores below 51 indicate a low level of CA, and scores above 80 indicate high level of CA. Scores between 51 and 80 indicate a moderate level of CA. This classification is based on means and standard deviations of scores from over 20,000 students (McCroskey, 1989). Details on calculating scores and results are contained in the data analysis section.

The participants in the present study were first given the PRCA-24 measurement tool, then asked to complete a questionnaire about their participation in extracurricular activities and general attitudes toward the effect of participation in extracurricular activities on communication skills. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to explore their perceptions of extracurricular activities and how they affect the students’ communication skills in depth.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Validity and reliability of PRCA-24

The PRCA-24 is the most widely used tool and dominant instrument in researching CA (Payton & Scott, 2013). It is preferred above all other measurement tools in measuring CA, including its earlier versions (PRCA, PRCA-10, PRCA-20, etc.; Mustapha et al., 2010). It has a high content validity and an alpha reliability of .97 (McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985). The PRCA-24 has been used in various studies on CA (e.g., Francis & Miller, 2008; Mustapha et al., 2010; McCroskey et al., 1985; McCroskey et al., 1989; Mahdi, 2015; Payton & Scott, 2013; Amogne & Yigzaw, 2013; Rashidi, Yamini, & Shafiei, 2012).

Validity and Reliability of Questionnaire

To validate the questionnaire, the researcher sent it to two professors and one assistant professor at the same college, and they all agreed that the questions were clear, suitable to the students, and served the purpose of the study.
To make sure that the questionnaire was reliable, the researcher used it with seven students as a pilot. As a result of this pilot, question four (How many times have you participated in extracurricular activities?) was modified by adding options for the participants to choose from, because some participants provided open answers such as “many”, “a lot,” or “too much,” which does not serve the purpose of the questionnaire. Therefore, the researcher added the following options: “1-2, 3-4, more than 5”.

**Validity and Reliability of Interview Guiding Questions**

To validate the interview guiding questions, the researcher sent them to two professors and one assistant professor at the same college. They all agreed that the questions were suitable and could help in answering the research questions to accomplish the goal of the study. The assistant professor suggested that one question be deleted, as it was similar to another question and could be used as a follow-up during interviews if needed. One professor suggested modifying the structure of some questions, such as changing wh-questions to yes/no ones and adding tag questions. He also suggested deleting one question that would not be clear to the participants. The other professor suggested adding one question about the difference between classroom activities and extracurricular activities as a guiding question and elaborating on this issue during the interviews. All suggestions were highly appreciated and considered in modifying the interview guiding questions.

To ensure that the interview guiding questions were reliable, the researcher interviewed three students as a pilot. The questions were clear enough for the students and helped to accomplish the research goal. The follow-up questions may have differed according to how the interviewees answered, which was taken into consideration in the interviews.

**Research Procedures**

The present study involved extracurricular activities performed under the supervision of teachers. The teachers and the students in the unit have regular face-to-face and online meetings to discuss the activities. The teachers’ basic roles are to facilitate the students’ roles and provide guidance in addition to handling administration issues, such as obtaining permission to hold activities and preparing necessary supplies. Activities are selected based on the students’ and teachers’ suggestions and to mark global and national events, important international days, and important social topics in a way that helps the students improve their language and communication skills. Some distinguished activities presented by the unit have included: Orientation Day, the National Day, a Breast Cancer Awareness Raising Campaign, Teacher’s Day, What is Professionalism?, an Understanding Personalities Workshop, Breakfast at Nine: Coworker’s Day, a Mental Health Problems Awareness Raising Campaign, a Weekly Smile Campaign, Kids’ Day, a Walk 30 Minutes Campaign and a Weekly Encouraging Statements Campaign.

Eighty students participated in the college’s extracurricular activities as mentioned earlier. All students were invited to participate in the first part of the study, and they were told that their participation would involve answering the PRCA-24 questions and completing the questionnaire. However, only 40 students were willing to participate. After they consented to participating in the study, they were told that their participation was voluntary and that all information received would be kept confidential and used for the purpose of the study only. The
40 participants answered the PRCA-24 questions, and their responses were calculated by following the scoring formula that McCroskey (1982) developed. Then, the participants completed the questionnaire. The goal of the questionnaire was to determine how many times they had participated in extracurricular activities. The questionnaire was also designed to provide a general overview of their attitudes toward the effect of extracurricular activities on communication skills. The amount of participation in extracurricular activities was then correlated with the participants’ scores on the PRCA-24, with the goal of examining the relationship between them. Details regarding the data analysis are given later.

Eight participants from the 40 who completed the first part of the study were then randomly selected to be interviewed. They were told that their voices would be recorded for transcription purposes, all information would be kept confidential and used for the purpose of the study only, and that their recordings would be deleted following the completion of the study. The participants were given the following pseudonyms for the data analysis: “Rana, Mona, Nouf, Nada, Lena, Yara, Rema, and Hana.” Afterward, the researcher began the interviews via telephone, which the interviewees preferred because they could talk at any time during the day. This made them more relaxed and free to converse. Borg (2006) stated that interviews are most commonly conducted in face-to-face situations. However, they can also be conducted using the telephone.

The researcher started by welcoming the participants and thanking them for their generous cooperation and the time they devoted to the interviews. After talking about general issues, the researcher began interviews using the prepared interview guiding questions as well as some follow-up ones depending on the interviewees’ answers. All interviews went smoothly and were full of rich information that served the purpose of the study. The researcher received some nice messages via Whatsapp from interviewees expressing their interest in the study and praising her style. This had a very positive impact and pushed her to complete the study with greater motivation and enthusiasm. In addition, the researcher asked the participants some follow-up questions via Whatsapp for the clarification of some points and received the answers as voice notes. Afterward, all interviews were transcribed to be coded and analyzed qualitatively using the grounded theory. Dörnyei (2007) strongly claimed that data analysis using the grounded theory should meet two important criteria: “The data analysis follows the specific sequential coding system advocated by the grounded theory and the analysis produces some theory as an outcome of the investigation” (p. 258). The data collected through interviews in this study were coded and categorized. Then, some relationships between these categories were established to derive a theory. Two professors and one assistant professor at the same college were asked to revise the codes and categories of data to ensure appropriate categorization. High consistency was found between the researcher and the two reviewers in the data categorization. Details regarding the data analysis are given later.

Data Analysis

In this study, a mixed-method approach was used to answer the research questions. The data were collected using the PRCA-24 tool, a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The data collected through the first two instruments were analyzed quantitatively using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20, and the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed qualitatively using the grounded theory.
The scores of the participants on the PRCA-24 and the relation of such scores to the number of activities in which they participated were analyzed using SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were used to express variables. The scores of the participants on the PRCA-24 were grouped according to whether they were low (<51), moderate (51 - 80), or high (>80) following the scoring formula by McCroskey (1989). The amount of participation in extracurricular activities was classified into three groups: ( 1 - 2, 3 - 4, and more than five ). For the purpose of comparing the participants’ scores on the PRCA-24 with the number of activities, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. The post-hoc test was used to compare the scores when the ANOVA was significant. Significance was accepted at p<0.05 (*).

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of PRCA-24 scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score PRCA-24</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>14.38</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.025*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>60.45</td>
<td>13.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 and more</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49.94</td>
<td>11.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56.02</td>
<td>13.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that the mean of the scores on the PRCA-24 for the 1-2 activity group was 62.7 with a standard deviation of 14.38. The mean of the scores on the PRCA-24 for the 3-4 activity group was 60.45 with a standard deviation of 13.83. The mean of the scores on the PRCA-24 for the more than five activity group was 49.94 with a standard deviation of 11.49. The mean of the scores on the PRCA-24 for the total number of participants was 56.02 with a standard deviation of 13.88. A significant difference was found in the mean of the participants’ scores on the PRCA-24 according to the number of activities, as the significance was F=4.1, 0.025*, which was <0.05.

Table 2. Mean difference of scores in the three groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Activities</th>
<th>Number of Activities</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>0.916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>5 and more</td>
<td>12.75*</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>0.041*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>5 and more</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reveals that the mean difference of the scores of the participants in the 1-2 activity group when compared with the 3-4 activity group was 2.24. No significant difference was found between the two groups, as the significance was 0.916, which was >0.05. The table also shows that the mean difference of the scores of the participants in the 1-2 activity group when compared with the more than five activity group was 12.75. A significant difference was found between the two groups, as the significance was 0.041, which was <0.05. The table furthermore shows that the mean difference of the scores of the participants in the 3-4 activity group when compared with the more than five activity group was 10.50. No significance difference was found between the two groups, as the significance was 0.093, which was >0.05. This indicated that a difference existed between the students with greater levels of participation in activities when compared with those with less participation.
Table 3. Percentages of scores on PRCA-24 and number of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Activities</th>
<th>Score PSCA -24</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>9.10%</td>
<td>81.80%</td>
<td>9.10%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>36.80%</td>
<td>63.20%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 and more</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>22.50%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table indicates that 10 participants among the 40 who participated in the study (25%) participated in 1–2 activities, 11 participants (27.50%) participated in 3–4 activities, and 19 participants (47.50%) participated in more than five activities. It also shows that nine participants (22.5%) had low CA, 28 participants (70%) had moderate CA, and three participants (7.5%) had high CA. Among those who had low CA, one student (11.10%) participated in 1–2 activities, one student (11.10%) participated in 3–4 activities, and seven students (77.80%) participated in more than five activities. Among those who had moderate CA, seven students (25%) participated in 1–2 activities, nine students (32.10%) participated in 3–4 activities, and 12 students (42.90%) participated in more than five activities. Among those who had high CA, two students (66.70%) participated in 1–2 activities, one student (33.30%) participated in 3–4 activities and zero students (0%) participated in more than five activities. The table also shows that among those who participated in 1–2 activities, only one participant (10%) had low CA, seven participants (70%) had moderate CA, and two participants (20%) had high CA. Among those who participated in 3–4 activities, only one participant (9.10%) had low CA, nine participants (81.80%) had moderate CA, and only one participant (9.10%) had high CA. Among those who participated in more than five activities, seven participants (36.80%) had low CA, 12 participants (63.20%) had moderate CA, and no participants (0%) had high CA.

The Questionnaire
The questionnaire was aimed at providing a general overview of the students’ perspectives regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on their communication skills. The data collected through this questionnaire showed that 100% of the participants want to improve their communication skills. It showed that 51% of the participants want to improve their public speaking skills, 12% want to improve their meeting skills, 19% want to improve their group discussion skills, and 18% want to improve their interpersonal skills. The study also showed that 100% of the students agree that participating in extracurricular activities help them to improve their communication skills.
The analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire also showed that students are willing to perform a variety of roles in extracurricular activities. A total of 37% of the participants indicated that they like to assume leadership roles. Other roles that students like include presenter (12.5%), planner (7.5%), organizer (7.5%), photographer (5%), designer (2.5%), and trainer (5%). A total of 23% of the participants indicated that they are willing to take on any role that will help to make an activity more successful, and they always think about the final product regardless of who produces it or how it is produced. For example, one of the participants stated, “Almost every role because what matters is how we do it and with whom.” The participants believe in teamwork principles and aim to improve the results of the task. The analysis of the data also showed that 100% of them agreed that assuming these roles in extracurricular activities helped them to improve their communication skills.

Regarding the types of extracurricular activities in which students are interested, 68% of the participants stated that they like all types of activities. They strongly claimed that the purpose of the activity is the most important factor in choosing the activity, as they all like to help others in various ways and spread positive energy at the college. For example, one of the participants said, “I like volunteering activities at my college and I like helping others.” In the same respect, another participant stated, “I like to make others happy.” A total of 32% of the participants prefer the types of activities aimed at raising awareness of important social issue, such as women’s status, community service, and children’s needs. The analysis of the data also showed that 93% of the participants try to improve their communication skills outside of the college by using English in various activities beyond their homework. The study further showed that 100% of the students agreed that they would like to participate in extracurricular activities in the future. The suggestions for future activities that the participants provided were almost similar to the types of activities they prefer.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

The researcher manually transcribed the semi-structured interviews and carefully revised them to ensure accurate transcription. The researcher read the transcribed interviews carefully more than once, coded them by underlining and highlighting the important parts, and took notes. Then, the following categories were created based on such codes: “communication apprehension, communication skills, classroom activities versus extracurricular activities, and a willingness to participate in the future.”

**Communication Apprehension**

All eight interviewees agreed that they face some levels of fear or anxiety during communication in English, which is associated with certain factors. For example, Rana believes that for her, the problem arises in the presence of a new person, which can affect her for a few seconds; then, this fear gradually disappears. Mona argued that her source of fear in communication is the incorrect pronunciation of new English words which puts her under stress. Lena sometimes forgets some words and has to stop to remember them, which affects her negatively. However, she asserted, “The problem is not in my personality, I stop to remember the word!” Nada said that she is afraid of other people misunderstanding her during communication, which is a source of anxiety for her. Yara finds herself to be more active and enthusiastic in indirect speech via electronic devices rather than face-to-face communication. This might be, as
she claimed, “because of eye contact.” However, this does not mean that she completely avoids face-to-face communication.

On the other hand, all eight interviewees love to participate in discussions and meetings in English, and they find it easy to express themselves and to understand others. Nouf and Rema agreed that they have strong persuasion skills and can communicate flexibly with others on various occasions. Rema also added that she understands people and persuades them according to their personalities. Mona stated that she loves to speak in front of a large audience, as this gives her more power. She loves to see many people around her and rarely focuses on a few people. She believes that “maybe this is different from my friends. But, it can be a point of strength in my personality.” Nada stated that she has high self-confidence and loves to join meetings and express her opinions. She always smiles and gives positive reactions to others. Lena, Yara, and Rana stated that they like to communicate with everyone, everywhere, and about everything. Yara added that she quickly picks up new words and structures from new people, and this boosts her self-esteem in communication. The participants agreed that they overcome CA and improve their communication skills by participating in extracurricular activities, which is discussed below.

Communication Skills

All of the participants generally agreed on the importance of improving their communication skills as this helps them improve their proficiency levels as EFL learners. Hana stated, “I am not professional. I need to improve myself.” They have an inner desire and a great ambition to reach higher proficiency levels through ongoing developmental processes. Lena stated, “I want to be professional. I feel that I need to develop, even if I reach high levels, I need to develop.” The participants all strongly agreed that they need to make more of an effort to improve their public speaking skills. Mona believes that she needs to improve her interpersonal skills in addition to her public speaking skills. She added, “We meet new people, new personalities, different personalities, sometimes strange personalities… we need to know how to interact with them.” In addition to public speaking skills, Nada insisted that she needs to improve her meeting skills because meetings involve new topics and discussion skills, and that requires more confidence and knowledge. Rema thinks improving her public speaking skills is very important because this is a must for EFL learners, as they speak languages other than their native tongues. She feels stressed when talking in front of others in English, particularly if the audience includes the dean and the vice dean. Hana has the same beliefs and claims, “If you want me to speak Arabic, it is okay. I can speak now, but in English I need to prepare myself.”

The participants strongly agreed that participating in extracurricular activities helps them to improve their communication skills as EFL learners. Rana claimed that she meets new people of various ages through these activities, and this helps her to improve her communication skills. Mona strongly agreed that those who want to improve their English in addition to their communication skills can find ample opportunities in extracurricular activities. Based on her observation, some students become more fluent speakers and flexible communicators after joining activities. They can also learn from the teachers who supervise the activities and benefit from their experiences with teaching English and communicating with others. During the breast cancer activity, for example, Nouf claimed that the participants searched the Internet to find information about the topic in English and presented it in English. They practiced new medical
words, which increased their self-esteem during communication. During the coworker activity, the participants met the workers at the college and asked them to translate some thanking statements to the coworkers’ language. They pretended that this was an assignment for a translation course. The nice translated statements were presented as a surprise on the day of the activity, which had a very positive effect on the coworkers, who showed amazing reactions. Such activities “don’t only improve English. We improve our ability to communicate with others and interact with others,” as Nouf claimed. Nada agreed and added that discussions with others during the activities and after the activities are very helpful. Lena stated that she improves her communication skills by communicating with different people through Twitter and explaining the activities to them. She said, “I talk with many people. I know some people. I started to know how to communicate with people without seeing them.” Yara claimed that participating in extracurricular activities enables her to meet with graduate students and learn from their experiences. Also, participating in these types of activities improves students’ problem-solving skills because the students learn how to be ready to solve any type of anticipated and unanticipated problems. The participants agreed that “plan B” is one of the interesting things they learn from participating in extracurricular activities.

**Classroom Activities versus Extracurricular Activities**

The participants agreed that a great difference exists between classroom activities and extracurricular activities in improving their communication skills and lowering levels of CA. They argued that classroom activities can help them to interact and communicate in English; however, such interaction is usually restricted to the classroom environment with students who are taking the same course at the same level and in the same section with the same teacher. Extracurricular activities, on the other hand, involve meeting different teachers and students from various levels at the same college or at different colleges or universities with different majors and interests. They also argued that textbooks rarely provide suggestions for real-life communication and interaction using English and that such options are found through extracurricular activities. Additionally, classroom activities mostly revolve around academic topics per the requirements of the course, whereas extracurricular activities include a variety of voluntary topics. Lena pointed out that some teachers are more creative than others in creating course-related activities that can be performed outside of the classroom. However, such activities are graded at the end, which is one of the major differences between classroom activities and extracurricular activities. Classroom activities are mainly performed to fulfill the requirements of the course, and the course teacher evaluates them whereas extracurricular activities are free and are usually appreciated, as the participants personally choose them to express their talents and creativity. Mona said, “We are not comfortable in the class because the teacher will give us grades, but in the activity unit we help each other.” Rana added, “It is a different atmosphere. It is something I like. I do it because I like it.” Hana described the reason for participating in extracurricular activities as “inner desire. You do it. You chose it. It is free.” Nada stated that students in extracurricular activities practice various talents in different fields. Thus, students can improve their communication skills through extracurricular activities more than they can through classroom activities.

Moreover, the students claimed that the roles they assume in extracurricular activities are different from the ones they can perform in class. Nouf said that classroom activities usually take the form of presentations, where the role of the presenter is mainly to talk, and other students
listen and ask questions. However, in extracurricular activities, students discuss and interact with others, and they assume many roles. For example, the participants assume the roles of planners, organizers, leaders, and supervisors. The participants also stated that they can perform any role that can help to make the activity successful. They also change roles as needed depending on the nature of the activities. This is not always possible with classroom activities, however, as roles are usually determined from the beginning. Rana and Nouf strongly stated that they never think of which role to choose and that they focus on the result of the activity and how to make it more wonderful. Lena also said, “It is not a big deal for me. Usually I like to plan and supervise, but I can do anything.” According to all of the participants, participating in extracurricular activities enhances their leadership skills and raises their self-confidence. The variety of roles that they assume in such activities, and the flexibility they have in changing roles have a positive effect on their personalities and help them to improve their communication skills.

Willingness to Participate in the Future

Due to the great benefits that participating in extracurricular activities offers in terms of improving communication skills and lowering levels of CA, all participants showed a great willingness to participate in these activities in the future. Rana feels that her activity team members are her family and believes that voluntary work and extracurricular activities lead to happiness and a good mood. Nouf added that she likes to improve her leadership and communication skills and help others through extracurricular activities, stating, “I find myself there.” Yara added, “I notice how it helps me and how it improves all aspects in my personality.” She further claimed that she learns how to communicate with others during the activities more effectively than she does in the courses. Rema argued that it is part of her personality to help others, and she said that one of the goals of extracurricular activities is to provide help, show gratitude, and express feeling and thanks. For example, in the coworker activity, they expressed their gratitude to coworkers and thanked them for their essential roles in the college, and this is what Rema truly loves. She added, “It is something fun.” Mona stated that she can speak English and practice real-life situations more through activities. She also believes that “As a volunteer in the activity unit, I have always to be kind and smile.” Hana loves the extracurricular activities from her childhood. She cannot imagine her life without activities and cannot go the entire day without taking breaks that refresh her mood. Extracurricular activities are the best choice for her because as she claimed, “It is part of my life.” Lena added, “I love the activities because of the established relationships between me and my talents and my personal life and others.” Such benefits help with creating social people who love to communicate with others and improve their communication. Rema and Lena further pointed out that participation in extracurricular activities prepares them for future jobs as they are more confident, ready to express themselves and to show their talents and creativity, and convince others. The participants argued that extracurricular activities can be improved to be more effective in the future by inviting people from outside of the university particularly native speakers to benefit from their experiences. Some participants argued that extracurricular activities can be developed if new students particularly those from younger levels join activities and share more activity ideas and talents. This will, in turn, lead to improving communication skills, which the participants claimed.
Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and students’ CA level and explore the students’ perspectives regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on their communication skills. The quantitative analysis of data collected in this study showed a positive relationship between participating in extracurricular activities and levels of CA. To clarify, the results showed that the group that participated in more than five activities included no participants with high CA level (0%) and that 78% of participants with low CA level were part of the same group that participated in more than five activities. The results also showed that only 7.5% of all participants had high levels of CA, which is a low percentage when compared with the other two levels; moderate (70%) and low (22.5%). Additionally, there was a significant difference between the 1 – 2 activities group and the more than five activities group, whereas no significant differences were found between the 1 - 2 activities group and the 3 - 4 activities group and between the 3 - 4 activities group and the more than five activities group. This clearly indicates a difference between students who participate more in the activities and those who participate less and that more participation in extracurricular activities helps students overcome high levels of CA. This can be attributed to the fact that more participation in extracurricular activities enables participants to practice real-life communication, and improve their skills, which in turn reduces CA. Such findings are consistent with those of Eccles et al. (2003), who found that participation in extracurricular activities helps in practicing social and intellectual skills needed in a variety of settings and developing a greater sense of involvement in the community.

According to the data analysis, the percentage of participants with a moderate CA level (70%) was the highest among the three levels. This is in line with McCroskey’s (1984) findings that many students experience some CA levels, particularly during public communication. This high percentage of moderate CA levels can be considered a good indicator of the positive effect of participation in extracurricular activities and can be justified by the fact that participants are still undergraduates in the process of learning and improving their communication skills. This is consistent with the results obtained through the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews in this study. The interviewed participants stated that they all experience some level of CA, although they have a great desire to participate in various activities. They also claimed that they still need to improve various communication skills which is supported by the analysis of participants’ responses to the questionnaire, showing that 100% of the participants agree on this need. The study also showed that more than half of the participants (51%) agree that they need to improve public speaking skills, which is in line with findings provided by LeFebvre et al. (2018) indicating that undergraduates experience both internal and external fear associated with public speaking. The participants in this study also stated that meeting new people and communicating with different personalities make it necessary to improve communication skills, particularly as EFL learners who speak a language other than their native language, which constitutes an additional burden. This is consistent with research findings described in other studies (Mahdi, 2015; Schlenker& Leary, 1982).

The study also showed that all participants (100%) agree that participating in extracurricular activities helps them improve various communication skills. This has also been proven by other researchers, such as Jamal (2012), who found that participants in extracurricular activities gained many communication and interpersonal skills. The participants in this study also
strongly stated that through interacting (either face-to-face or online) with people of different ages and personalities and contacting teachers, they learned many social behaviors and became more successful communicators. Furthermore, researching the topic of the activity expands their knowledge and adds to their self-confidence while communicating in English with others. Developing problem-solving skills is one of the beneficial things they learned from participating in extracurricular activities, which definitely results in great improvements in communication skills. All participants (100%) stated that they would like to participate in extracurricular activities in the future because of the great benefits they gained from these activities in improving their communication skills and reducing CA. This finding supports those of Eccles et al. (2003), who claimed that regular extracurricular activities help adolescents create good social networks that aid them in both the present and the future.

The participants in the current study believe that more involvement in extracurricular activities prepares them for future jobs after graduation which is consistent with Tchibozo’s (2007) results. The participants suggested that extracurricular activities be developed to facilitate communication skill improvement by inviting native speakers from outside the university to exchange experiences and by motivating new students to join the unit. Such findings clearly indicate that the students have positive attitudes toward participating in extracurricular activities and that involvement in such activities helps them improve their communication skills and overcome CA, which leads to development of language proficiency. Such findings are in line with those of Mahoney et al. (2003), who found a positive correlation between regular participation in extracurricular activities and long-term educational success.

This study also revealed that 93% of the participants try to improve their communication skills by using English outside the college. This reflects the students’ willingness to improve their communication skills through a variety of extracurricular activities beyond their homework. Additionally, results showed that 37% of the participants like to perform leadership roles, which means that those students have high self-confidence and good interpersonal skills and believe in their capability to lead a team. This is in line with findings provided by Lau, Hsu, Acosta, and Hsu (2014) that students who are core members of extracurricular activities positively evaluate their communication and leadership skills. The participants also expressed their desire to perform a variety of roles in the activities, which indicates that they are enthusiastic and highly motivated to work on different tasks and express themselves through holding various responsibilities via extracurricular activities. This also indicates that they have good communication skills that enable them to complete a variety of tasks. All participants agreed that they improved their communication skills through performing these roles in the extracurricular activities. The findings of the current study also showed that 68% of the participants are ready to participate in all kinds of activities and that the purpose of the activity is more important than its type. They aim at providing assistance and making people happy. The remaining 32% of the participants expressed their desire to raise awareness of important social issues. All participants strongly agreed that such activities helped them improve their communication skills and overcome some levels of fear and anxiety in communication. This is in line with Makarova and Reva’s (2017) results. The participants also agreed that communication skills can be improved through extracurricular activities more than through classroom activities. This is because classroom activities are related to course topics to be graded by the teacher. This is in line with Mustapha et al.’s (2010) finding that fear of negative evaluation is the source of classroom anxiety for most
students. The roles that students perform in classroom activities are usually limited and do not contribute to communication skill improvement. The participants also claimed that textbooks rarely provide opportunities for interaction and communication, as opposed to the many options in extracurricular activities. This supports Bragg’s (2017) finding that teaching materials do not help students improve their communication skills.

This study also revealed that participants are open to meeting others and communicating in English. They believe in their capability to persuade others and understand personalities in a way that facilitates communication. However, they all claimed that they still experience some levels of CA under certain circumstances. They stated that sources of CA can be the presence of a new comer, stress due to inaccurate pronunciation, misunderstanding, or face-to-face communication. This justifies the higher percentage of moderate levels of CA described earlier. The analysis of data collected in this study through different research instruments led to the following theory: More involvement in extracurricular activities helps participants overcome higher levels of CA and improve their communication skills, and participants have very positive perspectives regarding the activities and their effectiveness in improving communication skills and reducing communication fears and anxiety.

Conclusion

This study attempted to examine the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and levels of Communication Apprehension among EFL students and explore the students’ perspectives of how extracurricular activities affect their communication skills. The data analysis showed a positive relationship between more involvement in extracurricular activities and levels of CA. The results showed that the group that participated in more than five activities included no participants with high CA (0%) and that 78% of participants with low CA were part of the same group that participated in more than five activities. The results also showed that only 7.5% of all participants had high levels of CA, which is a low percentage when compared with the other two levels; moderate (70%) and low (22.5%). Additionally, there was a significant difference between the 1 - 2 activities group and the more than five activities group, and there were no significant differences between the 1 - 2 activities group and the 3 - 4 activities group and between the 3 - 4 activities group and the more than five activities group.

The study also showed that the participants have positive perspectives regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on their communication skills. They believe that participation in extracurricular activities helps them improve their communication skills and reduce levels of CA, particularly as EFL learners. They all showed great willingness to participate in extracurricular activities in the future, as they are very helpful in improving their communication skills and preparing them for future jobs. The participants are ready to perform a variety of roles in different activities and stated that they improve their communication skills through performing different roles. They also agreed that such communication skill improvement is achieved through participation in extracurricular activities more than through classroom activities.

Limitations of the study

1- The findings of the study cannot be generalized before conducting similar studies with larger samples.
2- Only female students at the College of Languages and Translation at Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh were involved in the study.
3- The study was focused on the relationship between participation in extracurricular and levels of CA.
4- The study only explored the effect of extracurricular activities on communication skills from students’ perspectives.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the present study, which show the importance of extracurricular activities in overcoming CA and improving communication skills, it is highly recommended to encourage all EFL students, particularly those with high CA, to participate in such activities. It is also recommended that teachers who supervise extracurricular activities give students workshops on how to choose activities and roles according to their interests and needs. Students who participate in extracurricular activities are also recommended to give workshops to share their experiences in these activities and help their peers. Teachers should carefully design the activities in a way that makes them more effective in improving EFL students’ communicative abilities and reducing CA. EFL teaching material developers are highly encouraged to consider including a variety of extracurricular activities in teaching curricula. It is also recommended to include extracurricular activities in course requirements to ensure students’ involvement in such activities.

For future research in the field, the following are suggested:
- Comparing female students to male students in terms of CA levels, participation in extracurricular activities, and their perspectives.
- Investigating the perspectives of students with high CA regarding participation in extracurricular activities.
- Exploring why some students avoid participating in extracurricular activities.
- Examining levels of CA among students who do not participate in extracurricular activities.
- Examining the effect of extracurricular activities on students with high CA levels.
- Including larger samples to generalize the findings of this study.
- Exploring EFL teachers’ perspectives regarding the effect of participating in extracurricular activities on students’ communication skills.

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**References**


Involvement in Extracurricular Activities and Overcoming High Levels of Communication Apprehension

Alnaeem


Jamal, A. A. (2012). Developing interpersonal skills and professional behaviors through extracurricular activities participation: A perception of King Abdulaziz University medical students. *Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Medical Sciences, 98*(373), 1–43. DOI: 10.4197/Med.19-4.1


Appendices
Appendix A
PRCA-24

Dear extracurricular activity unit volunteers,

Directions: This instrument is composed of 24 statements concerning your feelings about communication with other people. In the space provided, please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Are Undecided, (4) Disagree, or (5) Strongly Disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Many of the statements are similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly, and just record your first impression.

Name (you can write your real name or any name you like):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I dislike participating in group discussions.</td>
<td>(1) Strongy Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I like to get involved in group discussions.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I’m afraid to speak up in conversations.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I have no fear of giving a speech.</td>
<td>(1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you so much for participating.

Appendix B
Questionnaire
Dear extracurricular activity unit volunteers,
I would like to thank you so much for agreeing to participate. Please read the statements and give accurate answers. All information will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of the study only.
1- Name: (please write the name that you used in the PRCA-24)
…………………………………………………………………………………………
2- Your level at the college:
…………………………………………………………………………………………
3- Do you try to improve your communication skills using English outside the classroom?
Yes  No
4- How many times have you participated extracurricular in activities?
1-2  3-4  more than 5
5- What kinds of extracurricular activities are you interested in?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
6- Do you want to improve your communication skills?
Yes  No
7- What communication skills would you like to improve?
- Group discussion skills
- Meeting skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Public speaking skills
8- Do you think that extracurricular activities can help you improve your communication skills?
Yes  No
9- What is the role that you like to perform in extracurricular activities?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
10- Do you think that performing these roles can help you improve your communication skills?
Yes  No
11- Would you like to participate in extracurricular activities in the future?
Yes  No
12- Can you suggest any extracurricular activities to be held at the college?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
Thank you so much for participating.

Appendix C
Interview Guiding Questions
1- Can you identify some points of strength and weakness in your personality while communicating with others in English?
2- Why did you join the extracurricular activity unit?
3- What kinds of communication skills would you like to improve?
4- Do you think that participating in extracurricular activities helps you as an EFL learner improve your communication skills? (If yes, how? If no, why?)

5- In your opinion, how do extracurricular activities differ from classroom activities concerning communication skills?

6- What advantages can you list from participating in extracurricular activities?

7- Are there any disadvantages of participating in extracurricular activities? (If yes, what are they?)

8- How do you prepare yourself for extracurricular activities?

9- What kinds of extracurricular activities are you interested in? Why?

10- Which activity do you enjoy the most? Why?

11- What kinds of extracurricular activities do you not like to participate in? Why?

12- How can we make extracurricular activities more effective?

13- What is the role that you like to perform in extracurricular activities? Why?

14- How do you improve your communication skills outside the college?

15- Would you like to participate in any extracurricular activities in the future? Why? Give me a final remark, please.
A Task-based Teaching Approach with Multiple Intelligences Features in Developing Chinese Students’ Speaking Competency

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Abstract
The study aimed to achieve three objectives: 1) to identify the Multiple Intelligences (MI) perceived by Heilongjiang International University (HIU) students, 2) to develop and implement a task-based English speaking course with MI features, and 3) to evaluate the extent the developed English speaking course contributes to the improvement of HIU students’ speaking abilities based on complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) components. The study was carried out with 30 experimental and 30 control group students at Heilongjiang International University, China. Data were collected by a questionnaire survey, the pre-test and post-test, and the final tests focusing on complexity, accuracy, and fluency components. The data were analyzed using the primary statistical measurements by identifying the Mean (M) and the Standard Deviation (SD), and the significance level. The results indicated that with regard to HIU students’ self-perceived MI, Music Intelligence was perceived higher, while the Logical-mathematical Intelligence was perceived lower. As for the students’ speaking ability, the results indicated that there was improvement found between the pre-test and the post-test in the COMPLEXITY with the significance value of .001, the ACCURACY significance value was .002, and the FLUENCY significance value was .001. The conclusion is that the task-based teaching practices with MI features contribute to the improvement of students’ speaking abilities in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency. The findings are followed by some implications for teaching and learning.

Keywords: accuracy, complexity, fluency, Heilongjiang International University, multiple intelligence, task-based language teaching

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Introduction

In many educational contexts, the assessment of the second language (L2) speaking performances relies on rating scales to award scores to language learners’ achievement. One scaling is the analytic rating scale which is widely used in L2 performance assessments. Such rating is created through experts’ intuitive judgment or adaptation of existing rating scales from one assessment context to another. According to Bond and Fox (2015), it is essential to investigate the efficacy of rating scales empirically to make sure that the data is of high quality.

The central dimensions of L2 speaking proficiency are believed to be productively measured by the notions of these different components, complexity, accuracy, and fluency, referred to as CAF by Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder (2012). Complexity refers to the elaborateness and variety of grammar and vocabulary used by students, accuracy is about the degree of correctness or deviance from the norm used by learners, and fluency is about the ease or smoothness of speech (Yan, Kim & Kim, 2018) in which its’ multilayered construct can be both theoretical and practical to measure the improvement better. Speaking is one of the most essential skills to be acquired for learning English as a foreign language, as it is viewed as a collaborative and interactive process (Cole et al. 2007). Through speaking or oral communication, people can agree or disagree, interrupt with or expand what was said. Good communication can eliminate obstacles that hinder understanding. Accordingly, a good speaking ability cultivates learners’ confidence to interact with others and is viewed as one indicator of a learner’s language proficiency. So, providing learners with tasks that illustrate such abilities through the use of the Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach helps assess how students create meaning by using their linguistic resources. Ellis (2003) believed that TBL is good in teaching and learning a language. This is regarded as an open-ended task and revealed that TBL follows a learner-centered educational philosophy as it is content-oriented. Willis (1996), Prabhu (1987), and Nunan (1989) argued that the task-based learning framework contains three main stages for language learning, the pre-task, task-cycle (task), and post-task stages (language focus), and also indicated that these phrases are planned carefully to produce the most satisfactory language acquisition conditions and thus offer valuable learning opportunities to match different types of learners.

The notion of general intelligence proposed by Gardner (1993) is that each learner has independent intelligence or a mixture of several abilities or Multiple Intelligences (MI), which could not be measured on a single scale. As this study deals with identifying university students’ intelligences, the most reasonable step to be taken is to let university students identify their ‘perceived intelligences’ by conducting a survey where they need to identify their intelligences. The researcher believes that students have known their intelligences better than those who observe them (Xu, 2020), which is why letting them assess their own ‘intelligences’ was the first ground of this research.

The study focused on the development of task-based learning integrated with the features of MI perceived by Heilongjiang International University (HIU) students for the English speaking course using three components: complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). The researcher employed various discourse analytical measures and quantified CAF subcomponents that influenced HIU students’ differing levels of proficiency.
There are three objectives as guidelines:
1. To identify male and female HIU students’ self-perceived Multiple Intelligence (MI).
2. To develop and implement the development of a task-based English speaking course with MI features and
3. To evaluate the improvement of the experimental group students’ speaking abilities based on complexity, accuracy, and fluency components.

Literature Review
Assessment of English Speaking

For many years, attention has been focusing on speaking skills and their significance in foreign language learning. Brown (1991) revealed that serious consideration of spoken language as a subject for teaching has a long history. Egan (1999) also considered speaking as the core of second language learning. However, this particular skill seems to be neglected concerning teaching and assessment, specifically in the context of China. According to Gammidge (2004), though speaking is essential for foreign language learners, learning this skill tends to be difficult. To speak confidently, a learner needs to build his/her language resources even in the essential interaction. Nitta and Nakatsuhara (2014) have proposed adding measures of interactional competence, such as the length of turn to their discourse analytic measures, to better represent the co-constructed nature of dialogic speech by paying attention to dialogic speaking tasks. Ockey and Li (2015) argued that an individual’s underlying ability could be actively structured in response to incoming stimuli, such as the information given by other speakers. Some researchers like Tong-Fredericks (1984) used a wide range of specific measures to quantify learner production. For example, they measured the number of words learners produced per minute of speaking, the frequency of turns, and the amount of self-correcting was also assessed. Also, Berwick (1990) measured the interaction by examining several variables related to language production, for example, the exophoric references and the use of context-bound referential pronouns such as “this” and “these”, and anaphoric reference, such as the use of pronouns to refer back to previously mentioned referent. Brown (1991) measured the task performance in terms of repetitions, prompts, rephrasing, repairs, and instructional input, when speakers explained something to another.

Newton and Kennedy (1996) investigated task-based production in terms of specific linguistic features, prepositions, and conjunctions in which measures have been intuitively chosen as data-driven rather than theory-based. Skehan’s research (1996) focused on the distinction between complexity, accuracy, and fluency and had drawn on his theoretical claims about a dual competence system and trade-offs in learners’ focus of attention. As this involved a degree of interpretation, Skehan and Foster (1997) reported that the measure of fluency, accuracy, and complexity obtained from learners’ performance of three different tasks was under predictions, which suggests that these dimensions of performance are indeed distinct and can be measured separately.

To date, although various measures have been available to assess the CAF triad (Ellis, 2005, 2008, 2009), Second Language Acquisition researchers have recommended to know and provide details on what facets of complexity, accuracy, and fluency they intend to measure (Norris & Ortega, 2009). Thus, using multiple measures for assessing each dimension of
performance (CAF) may yield a more valid and comprehensive picture of a construct if different facets could be measured.

**Multiple Intelligences and English Language Teaching and Learning**

Many scholars believe that MI can be integrated into English language teaching and learning (Gardner, 2011; Jones, 2017; Luo, 2018; Shearer, 2020). They perceive that this can be a building block for English acquisition, enhancement of all intelligences, and serves as an alternative for providing different assessments to help students further improve their academic achievements (Gardner, 2011; Luo, 2018). According to them, acknowledging multiple intelligences and using them as a tool to organize teaching and learning methods could help to avoid the ‘one size fits all’ teachers’ mentality to develop students’ learning abilities (Jones, 2017; Spirovska, 2013). Robinson and Aronica (2014) indicated that integrating different intelligences such as linguistic intelligence, musical intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is beneficial to students simply because each intelligence has its strength. Spirovska (2013) argued that MI has different benefits in the English language classroom. However, teachers should adopt a student-centered approach to teaching and learning and employ a dynamic and non-conventional teaching method so that students would bring out the best of their capacities and abilities (Zhang, 2017).

Collaborative learning focuses on a student-centered approach, and sharing ideas and expertise is part of the strengths of MI in the English language classroom. Teachers need to play their roles in the students learning process. When implementing the MI approach to teaching, teachers need not only focus on the failure of their students but strengths and abilities so that students will be motivated to engage more in the class (Shearer, 2020).

In this study, the task-based language teaching approach model was paired with HIU students’ self-reported preferred Multiple Intelligences to create an English speaking course. The aim is to improve students’ English speaking abilities and assess the effectiveness of the course by measuring the improvement of the students concerning three components, fluency, accuracy, and complexity.

This study aims to answer this research question: To what extent, the Chinese students speaking ability with regard to fluency, accuracy, and complexity (CAF) can be developed with the help of a task-based teaching and learning approach with multiple intelligences features?

**Methods**

The present is a quantitative study using primary statistical tools. 359 students at Heilongjiang International University, China, completed the 35-item questionnaire about MI preferences to answer the first research objective. To answer the second research objective, a task-based English speaking course with MI features was developed implemented among 30 experimental group students. And to answer the third research objective, the pre-test and post-test results will be used to identify the 30 experimental group students’ speaking ability improvement, and further, the post-test results of the experimental group students will be compared with another 30 control group students’ final test results.

**Instrumentation**
The survey questionnaire was the 35-item MI questionnaire which was divided into seven parts. Each part includes five questions representing one self-perceived MI dimension. The 5-Likert scaling was employed to calculate the result of the findings, ranging from 1-5, in which 1= indicated a strongly disagreement and 5 = strongly agreement.

**Validity and Reliability**

To get the validity and reliability of the instruments, first, the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach’s Alpha. The measurement was .917, which indicated that the reliability of the questionnaire was achieved. Furthermore, the construct validity of the items and underlying variables of seven MI dimensions was measured. The CFI (Comparative Fit Index) value was .765. The NFI (Normed Fit Index) was .677, and IFI (Incremental Fit Index) was .768, which indicated that the construct validity of the questionnaire was also achieved.

The reliability of all the variables based on complexity, accuracy, and fluency of the instruments was tested. The Cronbach’s Alpha is .773, which is considered acceptable, so the reliability of the CAF instruments was achieved. The construct validity of the CAF instruments was also tested, and GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) is .950, NFI is .743, IFI (Incremental Fit Index) is .986, and CFI (Comparative Fit Index) is .982, which is all above .70, and indicates that the construct validity of the CAF instruments was also achieved.

**The Research Process**

The research process was composed of three phases:

The first phase was started by the distribution of the questionnaire survey, which would help to identify HIU students’ self-perceived Multiple Intelligences, and the MI differences between male and female students were also addressed.

The second phase was the development of the English speaking course where features of MI perceived by the students were integrated into the English speaking materials and activities used, using the Task-based learning approach, which was followed by the implementation of the developed speaking course. The goal was to improve HIU students’ English speaking abilities in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency.

The teaching of the lesson plans, the topics, and activities based on the task-based teaching framework was constructed to achieve the second objective. Appendix A presented the topics and objectives of each topic. Appendix B presented the topic and the content of the teaching materials. And Appendix C presented the variables of the three components, complexity, accuracy, and fluency used for assessing the speaking materials (Ellis, 2003).

In the third phase, the values of each variable under Fluency, Accuracy, and Complexity were collected and calculated. The pre-test speaking scores and post-test speaking scores from the experimental group of students were analyzed using the data analysis software in terms of paired T-test. The scores of the final speaking test based on complexity, accuracy, and fluency from the control group were analyzed and compared with the post-test scores of the experimental group using the data analysis software in terms of independent T-test. The aim was to compare the mean value to observe the changes between the experimental and control group of students with regard to the speaking scores.
Findings and Discussions

The findings of Objective 1:
To find out HIU students’ self-perceived Multiple Intelligences, descriptive statistics were used by finding the mean value and standard deviation, which was followed by identifying the differences between male and female students. The results were presented in the following table:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the mean value of Multiple Intelligences (MI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MI Type</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>14.45</td>
<td>3.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical-mathematic</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>13.46</td>
<td>3.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>3.909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodily-kinesthetic</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>13.62</td>
<td>3.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual-Spatial</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>3.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>14.57</td>
<td>3.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>14.39</td>
<td>3.077</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table One shows that the Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) scores of MI varied from M=13.46 with the SD=3.19 to M=15.66 and SD=3.909. The Musical Intelligence has the highest Mean (M) =15.66 and SD=3.909. This was followed by the interpersonal, linguistic, intrapersonal, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and the logical-mathematical respectively. The scores of Multiple Intelligence (MI) indicated that students’ perceived themselves as MI-dominated. As Chinese learners tend to be influenced by Grammar Translation or Audio-lingual in China context, perhaps, utilizing this intelligence to develop their vocabulary acquisition through music can be their strengths. According to Gardner, music can be used in an educational context to develop and express students’ ideas through exploration and exploitation of the oral-aural channel (Gardner, 2011, p.129).

To identify HIU male and female students’ self-perceived MI differences, 80 males and 80 female students were chosen from the data and tested.

Table 2. Perceived Multiple Intelligences of HIU male and female students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MI Types</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14.91</td>
<td>3.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14.31</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical*</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>3.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12.86</td>
<td>2.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16.70</td>
<td>4.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15.75</td>
<td>3.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodily-kinesthetic*</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15.10</td>
<td>4.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12.93</td>
<td>2.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual-spatial</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14.41</td>
<td>3.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>13.86</td>
<td>2.727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal*</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15.64</td>
<td>4.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>13.94</td>
<td>2.678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14.64</td>
<td>3.739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
female 80 14.24 2.466

* Significant Difference at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table Two illustrates that male students’ self-perceived MI is higher than females among the seven intelligences. Male students indicated that their highest self-perceived MI is Musical Intelligence, and their lowest self-perceived intelligence is Visual-spatial Intelligence with the lowest self-perceived MI of M= 14.41 and SD=3.679. Similarly, female students’ highest self-perceived MI was Musical intelligences with M=15.75 and SD=3.866 while the lowest self-perceived MI is Logical Intelligence with M=12.86 and SD=2.755.

Interestingly, it was indicated that there were significant differences between male and female MI in terms of the three intelligences, Logical Intelligence, Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence, and Interpersonal Intelligence where the male students always show HIGHER than female students. According to Gardner (2011), people who are high in logical-mathematical are perceived to be good with abstract entities of numbers. Also, these individuals tend to question and answer their limits by exploring, analyzing, categorizing, and working in different ways (Gardner, 2011). Nonetheless, people who are high in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence tend to use non-verbal communication or body language often to communicate, whereas, interpersonal intelligence involves the moods in communication or how a person interacts with others. While people who are HIGH in interpersonal intelligence tend to have a good relationship with others as they can express and discuss their ideas with others clearly (Gardner, 2011).

Table 3. Comparison between post-test and pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Complexity2-Complexity1</td>
<td>3.800</td>
<td>5.768</td>
<td>3.608</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Accuracy2-Accuracy1</td>
<td>4.066</td>
<td>6.542</td>
<td>3.404</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fluency2-Fluency1</td>
<td>7.767</td>
<td>11.545</td>
<td>3.685</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the comparison between each pair using Paired T-test, the complexity shows a .001 significance value, the mean value is equivalent to M=3.800 with the SD=5.768, the accuracy pair shows the mean is equivalent to M=4.066, with SD=6.542 and the significance value is .002, the fluency pair shows the mean is M=7.767, with SD=11.545 and the significance value is .001. Based on the results, it indicated that there was an improvement statistically in complexity, accuracy, and fluency among HIU students.

Table 4. Comparison between the experimental and the control group of HIU students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Complexity2-Complexity3</td>
<td>3.033</td>
<td>1.326</td>
<td>2.288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Accuracy2-Accuracy3</td>
<td>6.411</td>
<td>1.814</td>
<td>3.534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fluency2-Fluency3</td>
<td>7.433</td>
<td>3.491</td>
<td>2.129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Four indicates that the comparison between each pair using Independent Sample T-test based on the Mean and the Standard Deviation (SD), the complexity pair indicated the Mean value, M= 3.033 with the SD=1.326, with the significance value .026; the accuracy pair, the M=6.411 and the SD=1.814, with the significance value .001; the fluency pair, the M=7.433 and the SD=3.491, with the significance value .038, therefore, with regard to the comparison between
the experimental and the control group in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency, there was also an improvement.

**Pedagogical Implications**

A few pedagogical implications on teaching and learning based on the experimental study in which the task-based approach with Multiple Intelligences features was developed are:

First, when designing a course, using the task-based teaching framework, necessary steps should be planned appropriately. This should start with the objectives and goals to meet the needs of students. When deciding the topics used in speaking, the teaching materials, topics, and activities should always support students’ ability levels, learning styles, and needs. As learning can be a slow process, especially for the learners who learned English as a foreign language, the results cannot be achieved for a short period of time.

Second, as this experimental English-speaking course was taught online, therefore some approaches need to be considered whether this can be used in this particular mode of teaching. Therefore, further experimentation needs to be done to see to it what type of learning environment a task-based approach to teaching and learning works best, especially if it is combined with MI features. Accordingly, as a task-based teaching approach is best taught in a student-centered environment, online teaching therefore might be worth trying to adapt to the pandemic environment. However, a classroom can still be viewed as suitable learning environments as real interaction and communication are needed to see the effectiveness of the lessons. Therefore, depending on the approach a teacher used, the efficiency of the lesson relies on teaching activities, teaching styles, and the mode of learning.

Third, although Multiple Intelligences (MI) approach has been used by different educators for many years, teachers should take into account what intelligences best suit each student. Therefore, teachers and learners’ fundamental beliefs about teaching and learning need more reflection, and the task-based approach model with MI dimensions can be used effectively to enhance students’ speaking abilities. TBL is an open-ended task, and more activities should be used to support this approach, as one of its strengths is student-centered types of teaching and learning.

**Conclusion**

This study was divided into three phases: Phase One was about identifying HIU students’ perceived intelligences. Phase Two was the course design using the Task-based approach teaching and learning based on HIU students’ perceived intelligences and the course implementation of the teaching materials and activities. Phase Three was the assessment of its effectiveness in three components: complexity, accuracy, and fluency.

With the quantitative method for the analysis, the results indicated significant improvement after the experiment with regard to complexity, accuracy and fluency. This result was consistent as the experimental and control group results based on the three components of speaking, complexity, accuracy, and fluency, have a statistical significance at the level of .05.
The concluding statement, therefore, is that the development of the task-based English speaking course with MI features did improve HIU students’ complexity, accuracy, and fluency in English speaking.

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Xu, J. (2020). Identifying Students’ Self-perceived Multiple Intelligence Preferences: the Case of Students from Heilongjiang International University, China. *Arab World English Journal, 11* (2) 59-69. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no2.5.


**Appendix A:** Topics and its objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting to Master the spoken language and skills in expressing his or her personality; Sharing and presenting their understanding of their personality (pros and cons).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Cooking</td>
<td>Mastering the spoken language and skills in ordering food in four kinds of restaurants; Sharing and presenting how to cook their favorite food through real-life videos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate and Weather</td>
<td>Mastering the spoken language and skills in expressing and talking about the weather in different seasons; Sharing and presenting their solutions about extreme weather through real life videos to know that climate changes, culture changes, and we have to adjust to nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>Mastering the spoken language and skills in job hunting; Sharing and presenting what they would do to get their dream jobs by watching the video about HR’s secrets of job recruitment; Thinking about what success means by watching Arnold’s speech about the rules of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies and Interests</td>
<td>Mastering the spoken language and skills in expressing hobbies and interests; Knowing the differences among hobbies, jobs, careers, and vocations by watching videos; Sharing and presenting what their hobbies are and what they will do to balance their future jobs and hobbies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Travel</td>
<td>Mastering the spoken language and skills in distinguishing road signs when driving and in airport English about world traveling; Sharing and presenting what life they choose to live when retiring and why by watching introductions of places around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals and Nature</td>
<td>Mastering the spoken language and skills in distinguishing and naming animals; Sharing and presenting what they think about the relationship between humans, animals, and nature by watching a video named “10 Incredible Relationships Between Animals and Human”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>Mastering the spoken language and skills in expressing sports they like; Sharing and presenting what they think about the spirit of sports; Knowing the spirit of sports in a new way: respect and perseverance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B: Topics and contents of teaching materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting to Know</td>
<td>100+ Adjectives to Describe Personality and Character(video with subtitles); Self-introduction(video with subtitles); Being an Introvert is a Good Thing(video with subtitles); Who Is the Right Person for You (Personality Test)(video with subtitles).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Cooking</td>
<td>Ways of Cooking Vocabulary with Picture, Pronunciation, and Definition (video with subtitles and pictures); Ordering food in English (video with subtitles); How to cook the best restaurant-style fried rice (video with subtitles).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate and Weather</td>
<td>How to talk about WEATHER in English - grammar, adjectives, verbs,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Weather
- Nouns & idioms (video with subtitles);
- What Causes Day Length to Change from Summer to Winter (video with subtitles);
- Extreme weather needs extreme solutions (video with subtitles).

### Jobs
- List of Jobs and Occupations- Learn Different Types of Jobs with Pictures (video with subtitles);
- List of Professions- Useful Jobs Vocabulary and Job Names in English with Pictures (video with subtitles);
- 7 Secrets to Hiring Great People (video with subtitles);
- Arnold Schwarzenegger This Speech Broke The Internet AND Most Inspiring Speech- It Changed My Life (video with subtitles);
- STOP wasting your life (video with subtitles).

### Hobbies and Interests
- Hobbies and Interests- English Language (video with subtitles);
- Hobbies, Jobs, Careers, & Vocation (video with subtitles);
- Students’ hobbies and interests (video with subtitles).

### Transportation and Travel
- Transportation Vocabulary (video with subtitles);
- Useful Phrasal Verbs for TRAVEL in English (video with subtitles);
- Airport Vocabulary - English for Travel (video with subtitles);
- Step by Step Guide for Airport English (video with subtitles);
- The 10 Countries to Live or Retire (video with subtitles).

### Animals and Nature
- List of Animals! Learn 100+ Animals with Pictures (video with subtitles);
- 10 Incredible Relationships Between Animals And Human (video with subtitles);
- Dear Future Generations- Sorry (video with subtitles).

### Sports
- List of Sports- Types of Sports and Games in English (video with subtitles);
- 20 BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS OF RESPECT IN SPORTS (video with subtitles);
- I Did Murph Workout for 30 Days; Here’s How My Body Changed (video with subtitles).

### Appendix C: The variables for the assessment of the outcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of turns per minute (NTPM)</td>
<td>Number of self-corrections (NSC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical richness (percentage of lexical to structural words) (LR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of words functioning as lexical verbs (FLV)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of subordination (total number of clauses divided by the total number of c-units) (AS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of use of conjunctions (FUC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of use of prepositions (FUP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Task-based Teaching Approach with Multiple Intelligences Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of error-free clauses (PEFC)</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target-like use of verb tenses (VT)</td>
<td>Number of words per minute (NWPM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target-like use of articles (A)</td>
<td>Number of syllables per minute (NSPM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target-like use of plurals (P)</td>
<td>Number of pauses (over one second) (NP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ratio of indefinite to definite articles (RIDA)</td>
<td>Mean length of pauses (in second) (MLP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of repetitions (NRP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of reformulations (NRF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean length of the run (MLR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of words per run (NWPR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Iraqi Kurd EFL Learners’ Uses of Conjunctive Adverbials in Essays

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Abstract
The quality of any academic essay highly depends on cohesion and coherence since they affect the overall quality and the tone of the writing to a great extent. Conjunctive adverbials are among the types of devices which logically help linking sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into essays. Conjunctive Adverbials ultimately affect the cohesion and coherence of any piece of writing. This paper investigates conjunctive adverbials in essays written by Iraqi Kurd EFL learners at the undergraduate level. It explicitly attempts to discover what specific conjunctive adverbials types are overused, underused, or misused and in what positions in sentences. A learner corpus of 50 complete essays was compiled for this study. The findings showed that the participants tended to use more sequential and additive conjunctive adverbials than adversative and causals. Additionally, the results demonstrated that the learners relied heavily on a limited number of conjunctive adverbials, mainly in the initial position. However, the conjunctive adverbial category affects its place in the sentence.

Keywords: Academic writing, adverbial conjuncts, corpus study, discourse markers, Kurd EFL learners

Introduction

Writing is not one of the easy skills of language learning and teaching to master as a skill. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and instructors need to study this skill extensively. Alsharif (2017) notes writing is neither easy for the instructors nor the students. Apart from some other aspects, one of the elements that affect the quality of a piece of writing is cohesion and coherence, especially in second language writing (Rustipa, 2013; Güneş, 2017). Rustipa (2014) states that when someone writes, they have to write excellent sentences and organize them logically into paragraphs and essays. Xu & Liu (2012) found that the lack of cohesion and coherence is one reason why Chinese student writings are less persuasive.

It also seems there is a consensus among the researchers that one of the aspects to achieve cohesion and coherence is through the proper use of conjunctive adverbials (Qaddumi, 1995; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Rustipa, 2014; Sabzevari, Haghverdi, & Biria, 2016; Alsharif, 2017; Güneş, 2017; An & Xu, 2018).

Additional terms, definitions, and categorizations were found for conjunctive adverbials. Other terms were found in previous papers about conjunctive adverbials, for instance, "conjuncts" (Quirk, et al., 1985, p.47), adverbials (Biber, et al., 1999, p.762; Sabzevari et al., 2016) "conjunctive adverbials" (Chen, 2006, p.113; Xu & Liu, 2012; Park, 2013), "linking adverbials" (Peacock, 2010; Lei, 2012; Güneş, 2017), "connectives" (Salih, 2014), "logical connectors" (Wu, 2019), "adverbial connectors" (Tankó, 2004; Alsharif, 2017; Lee, 2013 or even 'cohesive devices' by Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999). All terms referred to the same set of words used by learners, researchers, or writers when the researchers explored the terms in writings written by authors or students. The current paper uses Conjunctive Adverbials (CAs) for the purpose of clarity.

There are also different definitions for CAs. Conrad (1999) defines linking adverbials as "those adverbials that serve to connect two stretches of discourse" (p.3). At the same time, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) and Biber et al. (1999) define them as words that add no semantic content by themselves but are only logical connectors that can function as signposts and make explicit the relationship between two units of discourse. Most researchers agree that these expressions do not add any semantic content to sentences; However, as Quirk et al. (1985) note, CAs contribute to the clarity and comprehensibility of a text, and Biber et al. (1999) argue that they can also express the speakers' or the writers' stance towards the clause. When they are appropriately used, it is easier for the readers to understand the logical connection between the discourse units. Yang (1989) claims, in speaking, using pronunciation features, logical connections can be made between the units of discourse; However, as pronunciation features are absent in writing, CAs are used to show that logical connection. Conjunctive adverbials connect sentences, paragraphs, and even multiple paragraphs. CAs, therefore, are words or maybe groups of words, which have different registers and depend on context, that are used primarily in writing that make a logical link between the sentences and help the overall clarity of a piece of writing without adding any semantic content. Proper use of CAs enables a piece of text to look and sound more linked and coherent.

These words are categorized in different ways depending on their semantic content and features. Halliday & Hasan (1976) organized CAs into additive, adversative, causal, and
temporal. Meanwhile, based on their semantic functions, Quirk et al. (1985) categorized them into listing, summative, appositive, resultive, inferential, contrastive, and transitional. Quirk et al.'s (1985) list, however, is not precisely accurate. As Xu & Liu (2012) suggested, a word such as thus, depending on the context, can be listed under summative, appositive, and resultive. Also, relying on Halliday & Hasan's (1976) classification, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) divided and categorized these adverbials into additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. Likewise, contributing to Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman's (1999) categorization, Liu (2008) divided CAs into four main categories: additive, adversative, causal/resultative, and sequential, and he also provided a list of thirteen subcategories and a comprehensive list of 110 examples of adverbials. In this study, Liu's (2008) taxonomy was taken as a reference since it was the most comprehensive and up-to-date list. Table 1 shows Liu's (2008) list of CAs.

Table 1. Liu's (2008) List of CAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additive</td>
<td>Emphatic</td>
<td>Besides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appositional/reformulation</td>
<td>For example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similarity comparative</td>
<td>Likewise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adversative</td>
<td>Proper adversative/concessive</td>
<td>However</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contrastive</td>
<td>In fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>Instead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
<td>In any case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal/Resultative</td>
<td>General causal</td>
<td>As a result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conditional causal</td>
<td>In that case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential</td>
<td>Enumerative/listing</td>
<td>First/firstly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>Meanwhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summative</td>
<td>To summarise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitional to another topic</td>
<td>By the way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are usually three positions for CAs in sentences: initial, medial, and final position (Tufte, 2006). When used in the initial position, as Tufte (2006) argues, CAs connect or contrast the new sentence with its predecessors and reduce repetition. Previous research papers suggested that the initial position is the most commonplace for CAs (Güneş, 2017; Xu & Liu, 2012; An & Xu, 2018; Yılmaz & Dikilitas, 2017). Irrelevance to what position they are used in, CAs are noticeable cohesive devices that can affect the cohere and unity of any piece of writing, especially essays. Meanwhile, EFL learners of the English language make mistakes while using these cohesive devices. Previous literature suggested there is a tendency to overuse, underuse, or misuse them in their writings (Granger & Tyson, 1996; Lei, 2012; Sabzevari et al., 2016).

**Statement of the Problem**

It seems CAs profoundly affect the overall clarity and coherence of any piece of writing. They might even affect the efficacy of communication (Blackemore, 1987). Notwithstanding, learners make mistakes using these CAs. Students usually overuse, misuse, or use these CAs in the wrong place in the sentence.

**Significance of the Study**
The significance of the study lies in contributing to the field of corpus linguistics. Additionally, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, this study is the first corpus-based study of CAs that Kurd EFL learners use in essays at the undergraduate level. Previous studies have examined EFL learners' use of CAs in Sweenden (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998), Hong Kong (Milton & Tsang, 1993), Korea (Lee, 2013; Park, 2013), Saudi Arabia (Alsharif, 2017), Hungary (Tankó, 2004), Taiwan (Chen, 2006), and China (An & Xu, 2018; Lei, 2012). Thus, this fills the gap in applied linguistics, particularly in the domain of CAs in the academic writing of Kurd EFL learners based on a corpus approach.

Purpose of the study
The present paper explores the use of conjunctive adverbials by undergraduate Kurd EFL learners. It explicitly studies what CAs are more preferred and in what position. Fifty essays written by Kurd EFL learners will be analyzed to discover the type of CAs, place, and frequency of each specific CA. The paper aims to find whether Kurd EFL learners overuse, underuse, or inappropriately use CAs. The results of the study will also be compared with other research about different first language backgrounds. Therefore, the results of this study might have some theoretical and practical implications for instructors who teach academic writing.

Research Questions
1. What category of conjunctive adverbials are more preferred by Kurd EFL learners?
2. In what position are conjunctive adverbials found?
3. Are there any conjunctive adverbials that are overused or underused?

Delimitations of the Study
The present study has limitations. One of them emerges from the relatively small size of the corpus which was compiled for this study. It was mainly comprised of essays written by Kurd EFL learners in the city of Sulaimani, Iraq. First-year students were excluded since they had not been instructed about academic essay writing in English.

Literature Review
Using different methods and approaches, researchers have studied the use of CAs by different first language backgrounds. Some researchers studied adverbials in speaking (Wu, 2019). In contrast, most of the other studies found were journal articles, student writings, or comparisons between the use of CAs between different L1 backgrounds to native English speakers.

Some of the researchers studied the use of CAs in published research papers. Peacock (2010) studied the use of CAs in 320 published research articles across eight disciplines. He found that CAs were used extensively in all disciplines to construct and strengthen claims; However, the frequency, form, and function of CAs varied based on the domains of the researchers, scientific fields used more CAs compared to non-scientific disciplines. He also found that contrast, addition, and apposition CAs were the most common types that researchers preferred. Likewise, Gao (2016), using two big corpora, compared CAs in research articles across some scientific fields written by English native speakers and Chinese native speakers. The findings suggested that there was not any significant difference in frequency use of CA use between the two corpora. Despite that, Chinese writers relatively underused additive and adversative CAs.
compared with their English native speaker counterparts. Lei (2012) studied CAs in twenty academic writing dissertations and 120 published articles of Chinese students studying Ph.D. Compared with professional writers, the researcher found that Chinese students relied heavily on a limited number of CAs and additive adverbials followed by sequential and causal/resultative adverbials, accordingly, were overused. Adversative adverbials, on the other hand, were the most problematic and were underused consequently. Güneş (2017) compared 118 English conclusion chapters of Ph.D. dissertations written by native speakers of Turkish to 102 Ph.D. dissertations written by native speakers of English. She found that Turkish native speakers use more linking adverbials compared with their native English counterparts in all subcategories. Additive, causal, and sequential adverbials were overused by native speakers of Turkish while resultative and adversatives were underused.

However, most of the literature was based on studying EFL learners' from various language backgrounds, using CAs in writings.

Crismore (1980) investigated high school and college students' mastery of meaning and use in reading and writing five formal CAs in the English language. In this study, the students were asked to generate sentences using the given CAs (namely still, hence, even so, accordingly, and moreover). The researcher found that students had problems with accordingly and moreover but found still and hence easier to use in sentences. This study did not categorize the CAs based on their use; it merely focused on the use of a very limited number CAs in students' sentences.

Milton & Tsang (1993) studied Hong Kong students' use of logical connectors using a 4-million-word learner corpus. They discovered that many CAs were overused in students' writings; They also listed the top ten overused connectors.

Granger & Tyson (1996) explored connectors' use by comparing a vast body of words between essays written by native English speakers and French in the English language. He found that the natives' and non-natives' ratio of the use of connectors was very close (1085 for the learners and 1178 for the natives). But he found learners made mistakes in using some CAs, overused some, and underused some others compared with their English counterparts.

Xu & Liu (2012) conducted a comparison study using CAs between Chinese EFL learners and native speakers using two corpora. In this study, Chinese students relied heavily on a limited number of CAs, mostly listing, summative, and appositive CAs in the initial position. Native speakers, on the other hand, used more inferential CAs in the medial place. They discovered Chinese students tend to overuse, underuse, and misuse CAs compared with native English speakers. The findings of An & Xu's (2018) study, in which they studied the use of CAs in 365 pieces of writings by postgraduate Chinese learners, also confirm that Chinese learners use more additive and sequential CAs compared to adversative and causal CAs. Both studies argue that Chinese learners heavily rely on a limited number of CAs regardless of language register.

Using argumentative essays, Park (2013) studied the use of CAs by Korean EFL students in different levels of their language proficiency and compared the findings with a corpus of American students' writings. The researcher found learners from all levels overused CAs,
sequential, and additives were overused six times more than those of American students. Korean learners also preferred initial positions, especially lower-level learners.

Sabzevari et al. (2016) compared the use of conjunctive adverbs but only in the initial position by Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and native speakers of English. They analyzed the data on two levels: word level and sentence level. They found that Iranian EFL researchers use more conjunctive adverbials at the word level, whereas native writers use more CAs at the sentence level. The frequency of the adverbials was also found; adversative adverbials were more used in native writers, whereas EFL writers used additives.

Alsharif (2017) studied the use of CAs by Saudi English learners in one hundred essays. She found that Saudi English learners vary adverbials, but they, compared with native speakers, overuse a limited number of CAs while native speakers omitted various CAs. In the same vein, Hussein & Mudhi (2014) explored the use of CAs by Kuwaiti EFL learners. The findings of Alsharif (2017) and Hussein & Mudhi (2014) both suggested Arab EFL learners overuse additives and causals whereas underuse adversatives CAs. It was argued that this is a sign of weakness and incompetence of the English language by Arab EFL learners.

However, little is known about Kurd EFL learners. Salih (2014) compared the use of CAs between Kurdish and English language but by using newspaper opinion articles. Also, Suleiman & Seyyedi (2020) compared using additive adverbials by Kurdish scholars of English and English native speakers in research article papers. They found additives were overused while causals were underused, and medial position was preferred by both Kurdish and English-native-speaker writers.

The review of the literature shows there is no consistency among the findings of the research studies. It can be inferred different first languages result in different results. Thus, further exploration in this area is vital for Kurd EFL learners and instructors regarding CAs in writings. Against this background, this study aims to find what CAs are more preferred by Kurd EFL learners and in what positions.

Methodology
This study investigates the use of CAs in English essay writings by Kurd EFL learners at the undergraduate level. The learners were asked to write an essay. The essays were analyzed to answer the research questions stated earlier.

Data Collection
The present study participants are undergraduate Kurdish learners of English, and Academic Writing is a compulsory course in their second year. The students were given choices to choose a more familiar topic, among several topics, and were asked to write at least 200 words during a two-hour writing session. Fifty essays were collected, mainly about two topics: Namely 'My Country' and 'Best Friend' topics. The reason behind the two-hour sessions was to guarantee that there would be no plagiarism. After the compilation of the essays, they were converted into .txt format since it was recommended by Antconc (3.4.4w) software.

Method of Data Analysis
**Quantitative Analysis**

Because of its concise classification, Liu's (2008) list was adopted to explore the use of each category of the CAs. The list is also adopted by some corpus-based studies such as (Güneş, 2017).

Corpus analysis software AntConc (3.4.4w) was used to analyze the data quantitatively. All the adverbials and concordances were extracted from the text using the software. The raw frequency of each CAs was calculated, reported, and analyzed based on the four main categories.

The task of calculating the ratio of occurrence of CAs will be done based on Granger & Tyson's (1996) method. It estimates the raw frequency of count of the target CA, and then proceeds to calculate a ratio of occurrence based on the frequency of occurrence of CAs per 10,000 words of texts. Comparing this ratio of occurrence, along with its position, with other research paper results helps in determining whether a CA is overused or underused and in what positions.

The researcher divides the total of CAs by the total number of words in the corpus. The results of the calculation are then multiplied by 10,000. This shows the frequency count of CAs per 10,000 in the corpus.

**Results and Discussion**

**Number of Essays and Running Words**

A corpus consisting of 50 essays was compiled for this study. Table 1 shows the number of the essays and the total number of words for all the essays. In total, the learners had written 14,032 words. On average, each learner had written 280 words in each essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of essays</th>
<th>50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of words</td>
<td>14032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The learners were asked to write the essay by hand. The essays later were collected and typed in a .txt file format to be used by AntConc. No grammatical, spelling, or other mistake types were corrected when typing the essays into the .txt file.

**Frequency and Usage**

One of the most widely-used word-based calculation methods is presenting the frequency ratio in terms of the number of connectors per 1,000, 10,000, or 100,000 words; this method was employed in Granger & Tyson (1996) Altenberg & Tapper (1998) studies. The averaged normed frequencies (per 10,000 words) of the total of CAs, by Kurd EFL learners of this study, are presented in Table 3. The frequencies of all the 110 CAs are provided in Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpus size in words</th>
<th>14032</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of CAs</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAs per 10,000 words</td>
<td>230.188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparing Kurd EFL results to other studies, the researcher argues that Kurd EFL learners do overuse CAs in their essays. The average use of CAs by Saudi and Turkish EFL learners was 133.6 and 124.62, respectively (Alsharif, 2017 and Güneş, 2017) per 10,000 words.
The researchers of both studies (Alsharif, 2017 and Güneş, 2017) compared CAs to native speakers and found that Saudi and Turkish EFL learners overused CAs. The results of this study can be used to argue that Kurd EFL learners do overuse CAs in their essay writings.

There might be some reasons why EFL learners overuse CAs in their writings. Xu & Liu (2012) state that there may be three reasons why adverbials conjuncts are overused, underused, or misused. Students learn them as grammatical markers rather than natural connectors, the exam-driven effect of the Chinese education system, and learners cannot use English as fluently as their mother tongue. In the same vein, some researchers argue that EFL learners use CAs to demonstrate that their writings are coherent; However, this overuse of CAs affect the clarity and coherence of their arguments compared with their native speaker counterparts (Granger & Tyson, 1996; Altenberg & Tapper, 1998; Lei, 2012; Alsharif, 2017). As a result, it can be stated EFL learners demonstrate coherence at the word level while, for native speakers, the writings are coherent at sentence and argument levels.

**Percentage of use of Conjunctive Adverbials by Category**

The data analysis showed that the study participants used more sequential and additive, with a total of 133 and 106 hits, respectively, which accounted for a more significant percentage of use than the other two types. Causal and adversative adverbials accounted for 71 and 26 hits only. The percentage of each adverbial type is shown in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunctive Adverbial Category</th>
<th>Total Hits</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sequential</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>41.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additive</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>29.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>21.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adversative</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 reflects that Kurd EFL learners prefer more sequential and additive conjuncts than causal and adversative conjuncts. That is, sequential and additives are overused while causal and adversative conjuncts are underused. These results are very similar to Park's (2013) study. This preference slightly changes compared with the results of EFL learners from some other different language backgrounds. Both Lei's (2012) and An & Xu's (2018) studies discovered that Chinese EFL learners used more additives, and the results of Güneş's (2017) study also show that Turkish EFL learners prefer more additives. Nevertheless, nearly all EFL learners, compared with the other CA categories, used the fewest number of causal and adversative CAs. As a result, it can be argued that there is a tendency among EFL learners to overuse sequential and additive adverbial conjuncts and underuse causals and adversatives (Xu & Liu, 2012; Sabzevari et al., 2016; Alsharif, 2017; Lei, 2012).

**Most Frequently Used Conjunctive Adverbials**

Table 5 demonstrates the top ten most frequently used conjunctive adverbs. Since two CAs, namely because of and second, were used 12 times each, the table contains 11 CAs. This list accounts for more than half (70.48%) of all the CAs used by Kurd EFL learners. It should be noted that although causal CAs were not used frequently by Kurd EFL learners, 'so', which is regarded as a causal CA, accounts for 11.30% of the total number of used CAs. The list also
contains CAs from all the four main categories; However, even among the 11 examples of the list, five of them are sequential CAs. These results demonstrate how Kurd EFL learners prefer frequent sequential CAs. These results are in line with (Güneş, 2017)(Xu & Liu, 2012)(An & Xu, 2018)(Hussein & Mudhi, 2014) in the fact that the list of mainly used adverbs contains CAs from all the four main categories.

Table 5. Top 10 most used CAs by Kurd EFL Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CA</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13.00 %</td>
<td>Additive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11.76 %</td>
<td>Causal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10.84 %</td>
<td>Sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In conclusion</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9.29 %</td>
<td>Sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.88 %</td>
<td>Additive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.26 %</td>
<td>Sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.33 %</td>
<td>Additive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.72 %</td>
<td>Causal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.72 %</td>
<td>Sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.41 %</td>
<td>Sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.86 %</td>
<td>Adversative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positions of Conjunctive Adverbs by Category

The researchers also analyzed the data to discover what position was more preferred by Kurd EFL learners in their essays. Table 6 below shows each CA category's place and their positions in the sentences they were used.

Table 6. The position of Conjunctive Adverbs by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunctive Category</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>Initial position</th>
<th>Medial position</th>
<th>Final position</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sequential</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additive</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adversative</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>206</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>63.77%</td>
<td>34.67%</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results reflect the tendency to use CAs in the initial position by Kurd EFL learners. More than half (63.77%) of the overall CAs were used in the initial place, followed by medial (34.67%) and final (1.5%) positions. These results are in line with Quirk et al. ’s (1985) argument, in which they claim the initial position is the norm for most adverbial conjuncts. In contrast, some adverbials are more common in medial or final positions. The results of Table 6 also show that the position of the CAs also depends on their category. Although the initial position is the most commonplace for the overall CAs, additives and causal CAs are more used in the medial place. Then, it can be argued that while most CAs are used in the initial position, depending on their categories, some CAs are still preferred to be used in medial.

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The present study explored the use of adverbial conjuncts in essays written by Kurd EFL learners at the undergraduate level to discover whether the learners overuse or underuse
adverbial conjuncts, what adverbial categories are more preferred, and at what positions are mostly preferred.

A corpus consisting of fifty essays written by Kurd EFL learners was compiled for this study. The conclusions indicate that Kurd EFL learners heavily depend on specific conjuncts to link the sentences and then between paragraphs. The results also suggest a tendency to use more sequential and additives than adversative and causal adverbial conjuncts. The overuse tendency confirms explorations of many previous research studies. Still, the strong preference for sequential and additive CAs is worth noting in that it can demonstrate the structure and organization of students' essays. Studying Korean EFL learners' writings, Kang & Oh (2011) had similar findings and argued that Korean students adopt the "explanation with enumeration" pattern more. This preference can explain why the students in this study prefer sequential CAs. Nevertheless, the list of top-ten most used adverbial conjunctions demonstrated that all four categories were used regardless of language register. The learners heavily relied on some specific examples underused or not used the other examples of the same categories. Of them, also, so, first were identified overused which are listed under different categories whereas likewise, in contrast, and accordingly not used at all.

It was also found that the initial position was the preferable position for the use of adverbial conjuncts. This finding was in line with the results of EFL learners from other first language backgrounds. However, some adverbial conjuncts were more preferred in positions other than the initial position, such as medial or sporadic cases in final positions.

**Pedagogical Implication**

The way adverbial conjunctions are used profoundly affects the cohesion and coherence of a piece of writing. As Crew (1990) notes, students need to learn to distinguish conjunctive adverbials semantically. Many misleading lists of so-called interchangeable connections might mislead students to commit errors due to training transfer. Pedagogically, Güneş (2017: 30) suggests, CAs should be taught explicitly "by providing authentic and concrete examples." Therefore, Kurd EFL learners ought to learn the meaning and the use of these adverbials to enrich and make their writings cohesive and persuasive.

Teachers of writing need to focus on connecting connectors in paragraphs and essays by exposing students to various types of language registers and instructing students properly about more authentic uses of CAs. Students need to understand those logical connectors are not just to link sentences together on word level; they connect the ideas; Therefore, they should go through a thinking process before deciding which connectors should be used. As Alsharif (2017) notes, the use of too many CAs does not necessarily imply a piece of writing is coherent. Students need to be instructed to improve their essays' coherence at the content level, not just word level. It is also suggested that the integration of teaching writing and reading is practical (Zhang, 2000).

**Suggestions for Further Research**

More extensive corpus-based studies on students' use of CAs, consisting of learners across the region, may be conducted in the future to learn more about the use of CAs by Kurd
EFL learners. Additionally, studying possible reasons of overuse or underuse of CAs using specific essay types and the relationship between first language and foreign-language writing might yield different results regarding the use of CAs by Kurd EFL learners.

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References


**Appendix A: The Frequencies of All the 110 CAs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additive CAs</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphatic</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above all</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additionally</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again (sentence initial)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also (sentence initial) (in &quot;and also&quot;) (in &quot;not only…but also&quot;) (in &quot;but also&quot; independently)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As I/you/we say</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As well</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a matter of fact</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In addition (to)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreover</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not to mention</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of course</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To crown it all</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To cap it all</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s (is) more</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apposition/ reformulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is to say</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In other words</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For instance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For one (another) thing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namely</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To put it another way</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To put it bluntly /mildly</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adversative CAs</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I'm saying is</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is to say</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I mean is</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which is to say</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similarity comparative</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatively</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the same token</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondingly</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likewise</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarly</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additives total</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.2. The Frequencies of Adversative CAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proper adversative /Concessive</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the same time (with and, but, yet, and while)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevertheless</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonetheless</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of course</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then again</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though (including contrastive meaning)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet (sentence initial) (after a comma) (in “and yet…”)(in other position)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrastive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actually</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a matter of fact</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversely</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In/by comparison</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In/by contrast</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In fact</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In reality</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the other hand</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instead</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the contrary</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather,</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dismissal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admittedly</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After all</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the same (often used with but)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyhow</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyway</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At any rate</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite /this/that</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In any case</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In spite of this/that/etc</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## A.3. The Frequencies of Causal/Resultative CAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal/ Resultative CAs</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General causal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accordingly,</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a consequence (of)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result (of)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of it/this/that</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequently</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In consequence</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hence</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturally (sentence initial)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So (sentence initial) (after a comma)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conditional causal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All things considered</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In such a case/cases</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In that case</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then (often used with “if”)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Causal total</strong></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## A.4. The Frequencies of Sequential CAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequential CAs</th>
<th>Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enumerative/listing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterwards</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eventually (sentence initial)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First/firstly</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First and foremost</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First of all</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first place (sentence initial)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To begin with</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second/secondly</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third/thirdly</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth/fourthly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally (sentence initial)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last/lastly</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last but not least</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last of all</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then (sentence initial) (in “and then”</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentence initial)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simultaneous</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At the same time</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the meantime (sentence initial)</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meanwhile</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summative</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All in all</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a word</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In conclusion</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In short</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In summary/sum</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To conclude</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To sum up</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To summarize</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitional to another topic, etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By the by</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By the way</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incidentally</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sequential total</strong></td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Use of Metadiscursive Markers in Letters of Recommendation: An Investigation of Gender Variations

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Abstract
This study aimed to investigate gender variations in letters of recommendation. It used the metadiscourse theory with respect to the following resources: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions. The findings showed that hedges devices were the least frequent in both groups, but at the same time were used more by males compared to female recommenders. Boosters, on the other hand, were highly frequent in both corpora and, like hedges, were employed more frequently in the male group. Interestingly, while both gender groups shared using specific hedging and boosting tokens, each gender group appeared to favor using certain devices. The attitude markers were the most frequent in the two samples and appeared more in the female group. Similarly, while both groups used specific attitude markers, each gender group seemed to use specific attitude markers. The engagement markers revealed the highest divergence between the two groups, as they appeared more frequently in female letters. Finally, both gender groups employed self-mentions equally, but female letters seemed to favor using the plural forms. The study closes with some pedagogical implications by highlighting how the theory of metadiscourse can be of importance for academics.

Keywords: gender variations, interactional markers, letters of recommendation, metadiscourse

Introduction
The genre of recommendation letters has attracted researchers recently. However, the role of gender in this important genre has not been studied from the perspective of metadiscourse. Previous studies such as Grote, Robiner and Haut (2001) showed the importance of evaluative features in letters of recommendation. They indicated that sometimes recommenders include or want to include certain evaluative features, but readers do not locate such parts in the letters. Hence, the present study investigates whether men and women recommend using different language expressions. Specifically, the study examines gender variations in terms of the use of interactional resources in the metadiscourse model by Hyland (2005). The study aims to focus on how academics use evaluative expressions to recommend their students, and at the same time, how they appeal to readers to accept their evaluation. The main research question is to what extent do men and women use evaluative language in their recommendation letters.

Literature Review
The Metadiscourse Theory
The theory of metadiscourse has been used as an essential analytical tool to explore a range of academic genres. It is an aspect of language that has been defined as “the commentary on a text made by its producer in the course of speaking or writing” (Hyland, 2017, p. 16). Hyland (2005) suggested a famous taxonomy of metadiscourse by providing two categories: interactive and interactional. The interactive category deals with transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses. The interactional category addresses the hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions. The elements in the interactive category fulfill textual aspects by helping produce a cohesive and coherent text. On the other hand, the elements in the interactional category are employed to establish interaction between writers/speakers and their readers/listeners.

It is important to note that metadiscourse is perceived as a fuzzy concept because it is difficult to establish its boundaries. Hyland’s (2005) approach, which comprises the interactive and interactional categories, represents the broad view of metadiscourse. It considers every engagement with the reader and every internal or external reference to a text as metadiscursive units. On the other hand, Mauранen (1993) adopted a narrow approach by excluding any references to the reader and external texts. Ādel (2006) adopted a middle approach by including references to the reader on condition that they refer to participants in the world of discourse, not in the real world. The present study adopts the broad view of metadiscourse because it gained widespread acceptance from researchers due to its dynamic and inclusive view of the evaluative language.

Few studies used the metadiscourse theory to investigate the role of gender in academic language. Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen (1993) focused on argumentative texts written by male and female students in the United States and Finland. They found that male students used more elements of metadiscourse than female students. Specifically, hedges were used more by Finnish males compared to American males. In addition, hedges were used more by Finnish females than American females. Concerning the use of attitude markers, they were found more common in texts written by Finnish females and less common in texts by American males.
Tse and Hyland (2008) investigated gender differences in book reviews in biology and philosophy. The researchers found that male reviewers used more interactional metadiscourse elements, i.e., hedges, boosters, and engagement markers, more than female reviewers. Yavari and Kashani’s (2013) focused on research articles and found apparent variations in specific sections. For example, female writers used more attitude markers in the introduction, while male authors used more evidentials. In addition, female authors employed more attitude markers in the conclusion sections while their male counterparts used more hedges. More recently, Alotaibi (2018) explored gender variations in acknowledgment sections of doctoral dissertations written by EFL students. The study found that self-mentions were more evident in female texts. Certain elements were used for different purposes. For example, female students used boosters more when thanking for moral support and utilized attitude markers more when acknowledging academic assistance. Male writers used these elements alternatively.

**The Letters of Recommendation**

While the metadiscourse theory is used to investigate several academic genres, the scope has not been elaborated in the genre of the recommendation letter. The recommendation letter plays a vital role in academia because it tackles certain aspects about applicants that are not specified in other documents, such as transcripts. It evaluates students in terms of teamwork ability, motivation, personality, research skills, and adaptability, to name a few. Kong, Steele, and Botham (2021) cogently argued that letters of recommendation “are necessary for advancement at all levels of academics, as they are widely required for grants and applications ranging from graduate school to tenured academic positions.”

The most comprehensive study on the generic structure of letters of recommendation was conducted by Maskara, Lau, and Lin (2014), who developed a six-move pattern. They are 1) Purpose of writing, 2) Context of knowing the applicant, 3) Applicant credentials, 4) Applicant personal values, 5) Applicant social competency, and 6) Closing remarks. Move 3 (Applicant credentials) includes four steps: 1) Classroom performance, 2) Research, and 3) Communication skill, 4) Work details. Also, move 6 (Closing remarks) contains three steps: 1) Strong recommendation, 2) Soliciting response, and 3) Best wishes. The researchers used this move analysis approach to explore cultural variations in recommendation letters written by Indian and British academics. The findings in Maskara et al.’s study are significant because they deepen our understanding of the move structure of recommendation letters and how they are built rhetorically.

Other studies have explored specific issues, especially from the psychological point of view. For example, Vidali (2009) investigated disability disclosure in five letters given to one student with a disability. She studied the letters intertextually by focusing on the attitudes of writers toward the student’s disability. The feature of attitude is central in the metadiscourse theory, and thus the present study is motivated to apply it to reveal hidden messages in letters of recommendation.

In addition, Colarelli, Hechanova-Alampay, and Canali (2002) examined how the interests of recommenders influenced the tone and appeal of their letters more than the candidate’s objective qualifications do. They found that “recommenders who had strong cooperative relationships with applicants wrote more favorable and longer letters than those
The Use of Metadiscursive Markers in Letters of Recommendation

Alotaibi

whose relationships were less cooperative” (p. 335). In addition, they found that male recommenders gave more favorable recommendations to females more than to male applicants. The authors interpreted this last result as an example of men’s avoidance of gender discrimination.

Grote et al. (2001) analyzed the disclosure of negative information in letters of recommendations. They created two survey samples, one survey was given to writers, and the other survey was given to readers. The recommenders’ responses indicated that they would reveal such negative traits, while the responses from readers of letters indicated that they do not notice negative features. This conflict of results showed a discrepancy between what writers assume to be reporting and what they actually say. This discrepancy was taken as a significant concern in Nicklin’s and Roch’s (2009) study, and thus, they examined professionals’ experiences and opinions regarding their writing of letters of recommendation. The analysis of the questionnaire items indicated that recommenders agree that letter inflation (i.e., exaggeration) is a problem and that they place more weight on letters written by someone they know.

**Exploring Gender Differences in Letters of Recommendation**

Exploring gender differences in letters of recommendation received scant attention from researchers. Bell, Cole, and Floge (1992) focused on pairs of letters written by men and women for the same male and female candidates. The study found that both genders have written differently when discussing the intellect of the applicant, as men showed more interest in discussing intellectual skills. Furthermore, men tackled candidates’ publications more than women did. Trix and Psenka (2003) analyzed letters of recommendation for accepted applicants for faculty positions at an American medical school over three years. They found that the letters for female applicants were very short compared to those for males. Also, they noticed that more letters written for females had more references of “her training,” “her teaching,” and “her application,” while letters for male applicants included more reference such as “his research,” “his skills,” and “his career” (p. 211). Schmader, Whitehead, and Wysocki (2007) examined how male and female applicants are recommended for faculty positions in chemistry and biochemistry at an American university. While the study did not find any significant gender differences in several aspects, the analysis showed that some letters for female applicants included more phrases related to communication. On the other hand, certain standout adjectives such as excellent, superb, outstanding, unique, and exceptional were used more significantly to describe male applicants in particular.

In another study, Nicklin and Roch (2008) examined whether gender and physical appearance influence readers’ perceptions of applicants and affect selection decisions. The results were twofold. First, applicants with inflated letters were found to be more successful in being hired compared to those with non-inflated letters. Second, attractive women were more favored in non-inflated letters compared to those less attractive. These results altogether suggest that gender played no significant role in letters of recommendation.

Madera, Hebl, and Martin (2009) found that letters of recommendation for male applicants included more agentic adjectives (such as those describing independence, assertiveness, confidence, etc.). In contrast those for female applicants had more communal descriptions (e.g., kind, sympathetic, helpful). The researcher further examined whether the use
of both types of descriptions (i.e., agentic and communal) affect hiring decisions in academia. He found that communal descriptions were negatively related to hireability, but the agentic characteristics did not reflect any rapport with hireability.

Finally, Dutt, Pfaff, and Bernstein (2016) examined the relationship between applicant gender and two outcomes of interests, i.e., letter length and letter tone. They focused on the discipline of geoscience and found that male applicants were significantly more likely to receive excellent letters than female applicants. Yet, there were no gender differences in the part of recommenders.

Methods
A set of eighty letters of recommendation were selected for the study. Forty letters were written by men, and forty were written by women. The letters were gathered through personal communication from the academics and candidates. The letters were all written by professors from different academic departments at Saudi universities and were given to Saudi students to recommend them for graduate programs. The academics were from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan, India, and Pakistan. The letters were written in English.

As indicated earlier, the study used the interactional metadiscourse in Hyland’s (2015) model. Therefore, the letters were examined by identifying the hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. First, the researcher coded the letters by men as M1, M2, M3, etc., and the letters by women as F1, F2, F3, etc. Then, the researcher highlighted each category of metadiscourse by using a different color. The whole analysis process was conducted manually by the researcher, and the results were reviewed by a specialist in academic writing who is familiar with the theory of metadiscourse.

It is important to note that identifying the markers was conducted with respect to the context because specific markers have different meanings and functions. For instance, in Example one, the researcher considered can as a hedging device. In Example two, however, can was considered as a verb that measures the ability; therefore, it was not counted as a hedging marker.

Example one
“I can see X as an excellent, dedicated, and conscientious scholar.” [M 39]

Example two
“I am certain that he can perform his assigned academic tasks in an efficient and a very satisfactory manner.” [M 15]

The following is an example of the analysis of a recommendation letter in its entirety. The metadiscursive markers are underlined and are followed by the name of its category in brackets.

Example three
“It is a great [Attitude Marker] pleasure [Attitude Marker] for me [Self-mention] to recommend Mr. X. Mr. X was one of my [Self-mention] best [Attitude Marker] students at the College of Pharmacy, XX University, who always [Booster] showed [Booster] an eagerness and interest to learn and understand the role of every [Booster]...
drug in each disease. At a personal level, Mr. X is a well-disciplined [Attitude Marker], industrious [Attitude Marker] student, with a pleasant [Attitude Marker] personality, highly [Booster] intelligent [Attitude Marker] and has excellent [Attitude Marker] communication skills. Mr. X also demonstrated [Booster] good [Attitude Marker] team working skills in group assignments.

Mr. X’s language competence is excellent [Attitude Marker] and I [Self-mention] do not expect [Attitude Marker] him to find any [Booster] difficulty from the language point of view. In my view [Attitude Marker], Mr. X compares favorably [Attitude Marker] with the best among my [Self-mention] students. I [Self-mention] feel confident [Attitude Marker] that Mr. X will continue to succeed in his career.


To avoid subjectively, the analysis was reviewed by a specialist in discourse analysis who had publications on metadiscourse. Some notes were given by the specialist, especially on the analysis of attitude markers, and these were discussed and amended. Table one provides an overview of the length of letters in terms of the total number of words.

Table 1. Comparison between the two gender groups in terms of the length of letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written by</th>
<th>No. of texts</th>
<th>Total no. of words</th>
<th>Average no. of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6230</td>
<td>155.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4892</td>
<td>122.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results**

From Table one, it appeared that letters written by women were longer with respect to the total number of words compared to letters written by men. The analysis investigated metadiscourse markers: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagements in the two sets of corpora. The results of each metadiscursive type will be shown in the following subsections.

**Hedges**

Hedges are employed by writers to reflect uncertainty and withhold commitment. Expectedly, the investigation of hedges, as shown in Table two, yielded a minimal number of instances. Male recommenders, however, have used hedging devices more than their female counterparts. As displayed in Table three, the modal can and the verb think appeared primarily on the male group (Example four), while the modal would occur only in the female group (Example five).
Table 2. *The distribution of hedging devices in both gender groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedges</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per 1000 words</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. *The most common hedging devices in both gender groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hedges</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example four

“X has a good personality and is liked by both staff and students alike. He is a flexible person and should certainly have no problems with adjustment when studying abroad. I think he will be able to complete his graduate studies successfully.” [M 11]

Example five

“Her ability to ask the right questions has always helped facilitate enriching conversations about the various literary works presented in class. I would rank X in the top 10% of students I have taught the past three years in respect to her academic achievements, her eagerness to learn, as well as her diligence and hard work.” [F 37]

**Boosters**

According to Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy of metadiscourse, boosters are used to emphasize and express certainty and to indicate high confidence on the part of the writer. The analysis showed a similarity in the two groups in terms of the amount of employing booster markers, as men used 27.8 tokens per 1000 words and women used 26.2 tokens (as in Table four).

Table 4. *The distribution of boosting devices in both gender groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boosters</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boosters</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per 1000 words</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examination of gender differences, as shown in Table five, shows that both gender groups shared the high frequency of using the boosters any, show, and highly. Women, however, seemed to prefer the use of the boosters: demonstrate, and always (Example six), while men seemed to favor the use of very (Example seven).

Table 5. *The most common boosting devices in both gender groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boosters</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example six
“Since she [always] proved to be hard worker, and cooperative, well above average who [demonstrates] initiative to undertake independent research.” [F 17]

Example seven
“During that period, I have had the opportunity to observe X’s strong work and study habits. She is a [very] diligent worker, and her analytical abilities are excellent.” [M 40]

**Attitude Markers**
Attitude markers elucidate the writer’s attitude to a proposition. Specifically, they are expressions used by the speaker or writer to reveal their feelings, emotions, and views. Examining the use of attitude markers (as shown in Table six) indicates high similarity between the two gender groups, as men used 49.7 tokens per 1000 words and women employed 50.8 tokens.

**Table 6. The distribution of attitude markers in both gender groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Markers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per 1000 words</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicated in Table seven illustrate the most common attitude markers employed by the two gender groups. Specifically, the attitude markers: excellent, good, pleasure/pleased, hardworking were the most favored markers for women (Example eight), while men only preferred excellent and good the most (Example nine).

**Table 7. The most common attitude markers in both gender groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Markers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure/pleased</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard-working</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wish</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impress/impressive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example eight
“During this time, I found Ms. X to be a sincere, hardworking, and dedicated student with impressive communication skills. [F 21]

Example nine
“She is a very diligent worker, and her analytical abilities are excellent. I believe that her professionalism, maturity, and independent analytical thinking skills made her a good candidate for whatever endeavor she pursues.” [M 40]

**Engagement Markers**

Writers use engagement expressions to address readers and build relationships with them. The analysis (as in Table eight) showed a significant divergence between the two gender groups, as female recommenders used the engagement markers (12.3 tokens per 1000 words) more than male recommenders (7.7 tokens). Across the two corpora, the three favorite engagement markers were you, your, and please (Example 10).

Table 8. The distribution and the most common engagement markers in both gender groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Markers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel free</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per 1000 words</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 10
“If you have any questions regarding this recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact me.” [F 6]

**Self-mentions**

The self-mentions make an explicit reference to the author. In particular, the author of the text is foregrounded through the use of first-person pronouns. The analysis of self-mentions, as indicated in Table 9, revealed that the most common tokens were I, I am, my, me (Example 11). Female writers additionally used plural cases: our and us (Example 12).

Table 9. The distribution and the most common self-mentions in both gender groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-mention</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Us</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per 1000 words</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Use of Metadiscursive Markers in Letters of Recommendation

Example 11
“It is my belief that his eagerness to succeed will serve him well in the Master’s program and I recommend him strongly.” [M 8]

Example 12
“X has also assisted us in our admissions office. She has successfully demonstrated leadership ability by counseling new and prospective students.” [F 28]

Discussion
The role of gender in the letter of recommendation has not been studied from the perspective of metadiscourse. To fill this research gap, the present study compared a set of forty recommendation letters written by male professors to the same number of letters written by female academics at Saudi universities. Overall, the examination of gender differences revealed more similarities than differences in both gender groups. To begin with, the genre of recommendation letters included a minimal number of hedges compared to the use of boosters. This is an unsurprising result because recommenders avoid vagueness and tentativeness; instead they stress certainty and confidence. Despite the limited use of hedges, male recommenders favored using hedges in their letters compared to female recommenders. The same result was found in the use of boosters, as while both gender groups employed similar amounts of boosters, males used them slightly more. It is important to note that while both gender groups seemed to treat hedges and boosters almost equally in their letters, they differed in their choice of the tokens. For instance, men preferred to use the hedges can and think while women preferred to use would. In addition, women favored to use demonstrate and always as boosters while very was noticeably more frequent in male letters.

It could be said that the findings concerning hedges are different from those by Trix and Psenka (2003), who discussed the use of doubt raisers, including hedges, and found that letters given to female applicants had more doubt raisers. Yet, they correlate with those by Schmader et al. (2007), who found the equal treatment of both genders in terms of the use of tentative language. It is interesting to note that the present study focused on the gender of the recommender, while Trix and Psenka (2003) and Schmader et al. (2007) focused on the gender of the applicants. This suggests that the concept of gender is subtle and thus requires careful consideration.

Concerning the employment of attitude markers in letters of recommendation, the study revealed that they were the most favorite metadiscursive items employed by recommenders. While they were approximately similar in both corpora in terms of the total number of tokens, they were slightly more frequent in the female group. Similar to the findings of hedges and boosters, men and women had similar views of using specific attitude tokens but at the same time had different preferences. For example, women opted to commence their letters with indicating their pleasure to recommend as well as describing candidates as hard-working.

This result is similar to that by Trix and Psenka (2003), who identified what they termed grindstone adjectives and found that these adjectives such as hardworking and dedicated were more common in letters given to female candidates. They argued that there was a tendency to associate effort with women and ability with men. This was also noted by Bell et al. (1992), who found that men were more likely to refer to the intellect of candidates than women do.
Specifically, they were more willing to discuss specific intellectual abilities and skills that candidates possess.

Also, the findings in the present study correlate with those by Trix and Psenka (2003), who developed a list of standout adjectives such as excellent, unique, exceptional, and outstanding, and found that they were distributed similarly in female and male letters. These results contradict those by Schmader et al. (2007), who noticed gender variations in terms of using standout adjectives, as male candidates were described more with these adjectives. Again, these conflicting results might be due to the different research questions in each study. Yet, they indicate a critical role gender plays in the genre of the recommendation letter. More specifically, it appears that each gender group maintains different views on the construction of the letter as well as the attainment of persuasion. Thus, they convey metadiscourse meanings differently through various tokens.

Likewise, the analysis of self-mentions showed that both gender groups employed the same number of self-mentions in their letters. While both groups used the same tokens, female letters included more cases of plural forms.

Surprisingly, unlike hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers which showed similar employment but with different usages of tokens, the investigation of engagement markers revealed a high divergence between the two gender groups, as female letters had a higher density of engagement tokens. The three engagement markers, you, your, and please appeared to be the most preferred items across the two samples of letters. The preference of using more engagement exponents in female letters reflects the female writers’ tendency to include readers as discourse participants and their propensity to address readers directly. In the genre of the recommendation letter, the employment of engagement markers occurs mainly at the end when writers suggest readers contact them if further information is required. The other strategy, which was favored by male recommenders in this study, was to opt for passive forms and thus eliminate the use of second-person pronouns.

Conclusion
Due to the lack of studies that explored evaluative language in letters of recommendation, the research presented here used the theory of metadiscourse to explore gender variations. The study is the first to identify metadiscursive markers in this genre, and the results maintain metadiscourse as a practical analytical framework to demystify essential investigations such as gender variations. The study focused on the markers in the interactional category, and thus elements in the interactive category would be an area of the inquiry recommended for future research questions. In addition, the current study investigated differences concerning the gender of recommenders. Future research may further take the gender of applicants into account. The analysis of letters could also be accompanied by interviews of authors to provide further insights.

Besides its extraordinary fruitfulness of shedding light on specific investigations, the metadiscourse theory can offer pedagogical implications to academics as it includes heuristic devices for writers. Specifically, academics might be made aware of the function of certain elements. For example, some words (e.g., think, assume) are considered as hedges, and their role is to highlight the writer’s reluctance and hesitation, etc. Therefore, their presence in letters of
recommendation may result in different interpretations on the part of readers. Furthermore, the large number of tokens associated with each category in the metadiscourse theory may represent an essential and wide variety of resources for academics to choose and employ.

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References


The Place of Arabic in English as a Foreign Language University Level Classes in Jordan

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Abstract
Modern graduates face major challenges in the international job market where knowledge of English and other foreign languages became one of the most important requirements of a well-trained professional. Even though the demands of such candidates increase, the methodology of teaching English remains the same. Modern educators and students demand the inclusion of the first language in their English as a Foreign Language classrooms, yet still, this method is considered controversial. Previous research generated ambiguous and inconclusive findings that the current study tries to re-explore. This study aims to find out the a) students’ attitude towards implementing their first language in English as a Foreign Language classes; b) how these attitudes can be related to their proficiency levels; c) the potential purposes of using the first language in the English language classrooms; and d) if teachers support using a bilingual approach in their classrooms. The current research uses a mixed-method design by applying a survey filled in by 400 students studying at Al-Balqa Applied University and semi-structured interviews with 5 instructors from the same institute to collect the data needed. The findings recognized that both students and teachers support the situational application of Arabic in the English as a Foreign Language classrooms, especially when it comes to the reading comprehension activities and introducing a new grammar topic or new vocabulary items. The use of the first language has to be proportionate to the level of students’ target language proficiency, as basic English speakers require the inclusion of their first language more often than their advanced counterparts.

Keywords: bilingual approach, English as a Foreign Language, First language, mother tongue, Target Language, monolingual approach

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**Introduction**

Learning a foreign language can be a challenging task for students due to a variety of reasons. First of all, the student’s initial knowledge of the Target Language (TL) might be scarce. Secondly, a student’s native language could be drastically different from TL. Finally, the teaching approaches adopted in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes might be inaccurate and ineffective. For a very long time, the only approach used in EFL classes was a monolingual strategy that banishes the First Language (L1) during the lessons (Littlewood & Yu, 2011). This approach is based on the idea that students learn faster and more productively when exposed to the environment of TL. While this is the main advantage of a monolingual approach, it also creates a range of drawbacks for learners. Specifically, students with little to no knowledge of TL will not be able to learn in a monolingual classroom, which creates additional stress and decreases the motivation to learn. The monolingual approach lacks flexibility and adaptability as a learning approach since educators in EFL classrooms would not be able to meet the needs of individual students (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013). For example, if a classroom has students with several different L2 levels, teachers will not be able to adjust the curriculum and instructional materials to the needs of each learner.

However, recently educators began to acknowledge the efficacy of the bilingual teaching approach in EFL classrooms by observing the flaws of a monolingual strategy (Ull, 2020). The bilingual approach allows teachers to resort to L1 in the classroom when it is required. For a very long time, educators refused to use L1 in EFL classrooms as a result of their training and personal prejudice against the bilingual approach. For instance, a study conducted by Alrabah, Wu, Alotaibi and Aldaihani (2015) showed positive outcomes of applying a bilingual approach; yet, the study also recognized that educators were predominantly reluctant to use TL in the classroom. In a very recent and outstanding effort, Bondarenko (forthcoming) reviews the literature dealing with the relation between L1 and “cognitive authenticity.” The writer concludes that there is a strong connection between the concepts of “monolingualism and naiveness-authenticity in the traditional discourse on SLA.” The study supports a new blossoming “cognitive authenticity” concept that is gaining more momentum these days. This concept allows enough space for the recognition of the “sociocognitive bilingual identity” in the EFL classroom (p.12-13). Consequently, it is clear that the negative attitudes towards implementing a bilingual approach are connected to the improper teacher training that imposed incorrect perception of using L1 in the EFL classroom. This situation was pinpointed by Hanif (2020) who highlighted the importance of effectively integrating the bilingual approach in any teacher training course.

De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) conducted a study that came to the same conclusion of the teachers having a controversial perception of the bilingual approach as a result of their training. A study by Murga, Damian and Tacoaman (2018) found out that teachers have completely different attitudes towards the bilingual approach, as half of the participants used L1 regularly in the classroom, while the other half chose to completely ban L1 in their classrooms.

The main aim of the current research is to detect the attitudes of University students and educators in EFL classrooms towards the bilingual teaching approach. The objectives of the research are to find out a) students’ attitude towards implementing their first language in English as a Foreign Language classes; b) how these attitudes can be related to their proficiency levels; c)
the potential purposes of using the first language in the English language classrooms; and d) if teachers support using a bilingual approach in their classrooms.

The controversial results displayed by previous research show that there is no consensus among educators concerning the bilingual teaching approach and its benefits. This issue emerges mostly due to the teacher education that professes the benefits of a monolingual approach despite the fact that students show better results in EFL classrooms when the bilingual approach is implemented. Consequently, while it is crucial to determine the attitudes of modern teachers working in EFL classrooms to the bilingual approach, it is also important to detect the learners’ perceptions and attitudes towards using L1 in EFL classrooms.

The present research uses both qualitative and quantitative methods and aims to answer the following questions.

RQ1: What is the students’ attitude towards using L1 in EFL classes?

RQ2: What is the relation between the students’ proficiency level and their tendency to use L1 in EFL classes?

RQ3: When do the participant students prefer L1 to be used in EFL classes?

RQ4: What are the teachers’ attitudes towards using L1 in EFL classes?

Accordingly, the objective of the current study is to explore to what extent using L1 is acceptable by the two sides involved in the EFL classroom in an attempt to pave the way for the development of a more up-to-date L1 tolerant teaching approach.

**Literature Review**

Multiple studies worldwide contributed to the debate circulating around building more tolerance towards L1 in the EFL classroom (Fauziati, Hidayat & Susiati 2020, Shabir 2017, Mart 2013 & Ochi 2009). However, the problem with this bulk of literature is that it fell short of reaching decisive ends. “Results indicate that the limited use of L1 is not unnecessary and has positive effects in certain activities” is an example of how reluctant and conservative most researchers appear to be when it comes to adopting a bilingual approach (Shabir 2017).

Students’ attitudes towards L1 use in the classroom are generally positive, as they tend to utilize their native language on multiple occasions in a class. Several studies recognized that students require using L1 in the classroom and prefer their native educators to teach them TL (Bateman, 2008; Hertel, 2009; Tajgozari, 2017). For instance, as it was recognized, students tend to use L1 when they need to check a new word in the dictionary or when they talk about personal things with their peers in the classroom (Galali & Cinkara, 2017). None of the 117 participants in Tian and Hennebry’s (2016) study favored an only L2 approach in their EFL classes at a Chinese university. They demonstrated that they wanted their teachers to use L1 to explain difficult topics and new vocabulary items. A sample of teachers and students explored by Hlas (2016) demonstrated the same opinion, as well. However, some studies demonstrated opposing results. Izquierdo, Marteniz, Pulido and Zuniga (2016) conducted a study to understand the reasons behind the low performance of English by Mexican students at the end of their school education. The results of the two-month video-taped observation allowed the researchers to highlight two reasons for the unsatisfying situation. The first reason was the teachers’ overuse of L1 (Spanish) in the EFL classes and the second being the “lack of communicative purpose for the use of L2.” Giannikas (2011) conducted a study in Greece where she encouraged the English teachers at a
primary school to almost eliminate the presence of L1 in their classes. The findings of the experiment demonstrated that maximizing L2 in EFL classes is doable and brings better results.

The main issue that EFL classroom educators raise as a precaution when they consider the inclusion of L1 is that it would supersede TL and decrease the quality of language learning. A point of view challenged by researchers like Boustani (2019) and Afzal (2012) who explored how academic proficiency is positively affected by the use of L1 in the EFL classroom and demonstrated that its integration decreases speaking anxiety among students and produces better results in their vocabulary acquisition especially when it comes to the low-achieving students. Other benefits of using L1 in the classroom included improvement of knowledge construction in TL, facilitation of interpersonal interaction, and an increase in language efficiency (Pan & Pan 2010). De la Fuenta and Goldsberg (2020) conducted an experimental study to see whether employing L1 in the EFL classroom brings better results than those produced in classes where only L2 is incorporated. The study that lasted for one semester employed 54 university students divided on 6 classes of elementary Spanish. The pre-test and post-test results proved that learners in the “+L1” sections improved “significantly more” than those in the “-L1” sections. This result is empowered by another challenge to the monolingual approach to L2 teaching in the form of a recent study carried out by Ali (2020). The experiment proved that L1 can positively affect the whole L2 learning process including the relation between the learners and teachers. This paper stands on two parts or studies employing university students enrolled in intermediate Spanish classes. The participants in the first study reported that they significantly rely on L1 because of their being unable to express themselves well in L2. In the second pre-test post-test part of the study, the same students were randomly divided into two groups - experimental and control. The results proved that the students in the experimental group produced more accurate answers, and as a result higher mark.

It was recognized that students’ language knowledge is better supported by the use of L1 in the classroom in certain situations. Specifically, as admitted, L1 has to be used in a classroom when required by the situation rather than replacing TL completely (Almoayidi, 2018). Several studies agreed that L1 has to be applied only when it is needed like “when a student fails to understand a new term” rather than being implemented as a substitute in the EFL classroom (Al-Musawi, 2014; Galali & Cinkara, 2017). Very few studies showed that EFL educators fully approve the use of L1 in the classroom (Jadallah & Hasan, 2014). Consequently, the use of a bilingual teaching approach is only justified when applied correctly in the classroom. In the Indonesian L1 homogeneous EFL classes, Fauziati, Hidayat and Susiati (2020) investigated through observation the ways school teachers employ L1 in their English classes as well as the reasons behind this tendency. The study reported that L1 was recognized in three patterns of “code switching: tag, inter-sentential, and intra-sentential switching.” L1 is employed in several situations like giving instructions, explaining grammar, reinforcement and for classroom management. The researchers demonstrated that employing L1 in the EFL classroom is both acceptable and feasible. Using L1 for giving instructions is also proved to be useful especially in writing classes by Taniş, Sensoy and Atay (2020). De La Campa and Nassaji (2009) video recorded teaching sessions for 12 weeks of sophomore German conversation classes. After the analysis of the sessions, the researchers concluded that L1 should be implemented since it “facilitates L2 learning.”
At the same time, the reluctance of educators to utilize L1 due to several issues. First, the evidence-proved strategy claiming that students acquire TL better if they learn it in the TL environment (Parker, Heitzman, Fjerstad, Babbs & Cohen 1995). In other words, it is believed that the more students are exposed to TL, the quicker they acquire it. Thus, the use of L1 is seen as a threat to this strategy. Second, many educators think that using a bilingual approach eliminates a challenge from the lessons, especially what concerns high-achieving students (Ortega, 2014). For instance, if educators began using L1 to attend to the needs of low-achievers or students with little TL knowledge, they might decrease the necessary level of challenge for those who have intermediate or advanced TL proficiency (in the case of the mixed classroom). Finally, opposition to using L1 is usually related to time constraints. Particularly, if students require explanation or translation of new vocabulary in L1, it could take more time and compromise the lesson plan that an educator has already developed for the students (Mahboob, 2010). Therefore, many teachers consider the bilingual approach a time-consuming strategy that prevents achieving the necessary classroom goals. However, the aforementioned issues do not take into account students’ individual needs, psychological aspects connected to language learning, and their initial L1 proficiency. By ignoring these specificities of learning, many EFL teachers deny their learners a convenient and safe learning environment.

The generally ignored teachers’ attitudes are explored by Kohi and Lakshmi (2020). The researchers conducted a study to investigate the attitudes of 40 EFL/ESL teachers in 12 different countries towards using L1 in their classes. The two main concerns of the study were the extent to which L1 is accepted and tolerated by EFL educators and the reasons for this employment in the EFL/ESL classrooms. The sample teachers “clearly displayed eagerness towards L1 use in their English classes. They also demonstrated that this approach is used more significantly in certain cases like translation, content explanation, class management and while dealing with the social functions of language. Macaro and Lee’s (2013) sample teachers stated that the heavy “cognitive burden” placed on low and medium proficiency learners caused by using an only monolingual approach hinders their comprehension of the TL. The sample teachers that furnished a study in China by Jingxia (2010) also strongly supported the adoption of L1 in their homogeneous EFL classes.

Students use L1 during translation and writing practices, when applying thinking strategies, as well as speaking. In addition, learners tend to think in Arabic (L1) before they translate, speak, or write, which makes the elimination of L1 in an EFL classroom impossible (Boustani, 2019). Mental translation (from L1 to TL) was explored by another research that also supported the practices allowing students’ occasional L1 use during writing, translation, and vocabulary acquisition (Al-Musawi, 2014). It was also discovered that teachers use L1 to improve vocabulary learning in the EFL classroom (Alvarez, 2014). Both studies confirmed that students were advocates of using L1 (both mentally and verbally) in EFL classrooms (Al-Musawi, 2014; Boustani, 2019). Despite the fear of many educators that L1 use could potentially decrease the challenge for students, it is clear that they do not consider the specificity of L1 and TL use by the students. Unlike the popular belief, students of both basic and high levels of language proficiency use more L1 in the process of TL acquisition. While students with basic TL skills include more L1 than their more advanced counterparts (Hanáková & Metruk, 2017).
A positive perception of L1 implementation in the classroom shows that students benefit from this educational approach due to the specificities of language processing. For instance, it was confirmed that the brain processes two or more languages in parallel (Ellis & Natsukos, 2014: 235 – 240). This means that creating the so-called immersion classrooms where students are surrounded by TL can be unnecessary. Particularly, if students were capable of learning TL alongside their already-formed knowledge of L1, the use of L1 would not interfere with their TL acquisition. It was found that L1 is applied in the classroom as a scaffolding strategy in specific situations when a better explanation of the terms or phenomena is required (Bhooth, Azman & Ismail, 2014; Shabir, 2017). L1 is used in the classroom to enhance TL acquisition (Lopes & Cecilia, 2019). According to two other studies, students’ inability to use L1 in their EFL classes prevents them from using an invaluable cognitive tool (Moeller, 2013; Arenas-Iglesias, 2016). Banning the inclusion of L1 in the EFL classroom practices is a myth, as the bilingual approach allows students to notice the similarities and differences between L1 and TL, especially in word-to-word translation assignments (Laufer & Girsai, 2008). Students tend to learn TL by following individual strategies and using L1 as a tool. Even though the bilingual approach depends on evidence and testimonials of students’ learning in EFL classrooms, the application of L1 remains scarce.

Methodology
Research Design
Since the present research aims at detecting the attitudes of EFL learners and educators toward the bilingual teaching approach, the researchers decided that the study would benefit from a mixed research design. This type of research design allows researchers to generate both empirical and conceptual evidence to answer the questions. In the current case, using a mixed design allowed the researcher to combine the findings retrieved from two groups of the sample (students and educators) to fill the gap in the literature dealing with this issue. Mixed design helped the researchers to highlight the students’ attitudes towards the bilingual approach and the educators’ experience in using this approach in EFL classrooms. To fulfill the main aim of the study, the researchers found it crucial to consider both stakeholder groups (learners and educators), as their experiences in the EFL classroom differ dramatically. Specifically, while the quantitative tool was used to detect the learners’ attitudes and preferences, the qualitative design lent a helping hand in explaining why or why not the bilingual approach is helpful in the EFL classroom from the educators’ view.

Participants
As noticed earlier, the study recruited two groups for the sample. For the quantitative design, the researcher randomly recruited 400 university students currently studying TL (English) in EFL classrooms with Arabic as their L1. The criteria for inclusion in this sample were the following: being a student at Al-Balqa Applied University (regardless of their majors), having Arabic as their L1, and willingness to participate. An announcement was placed on the students’ board with the researcher’s contacts. Participants who decided to contact the researcher, received brief information about the study, a sample of the consent form, a sample of the questionnaire, and a list of the rights and responsibilities of the participation. The university EFL educators who formed the second sample were recruited depending on purposive sampling. Five educators eventually took part in the research. Criteria for inclusion were the following: being employed as an educator in the Department of English Language and Literature at Al-Balqa Applied
University in the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020, the experience of being an EFL teacher for at least five years, and willingness to take part in the research. This group of respondents was recruited face-to-face by approaching each educator personally. This group of participants received the same list of documents except for the questionnaire.

Research Instruments

Quantitative data was collected by the original survey that was elaborated by the researcher and completed by the participant students. The questionnaire for the survey included 12 items (Appendix A), which included the questions on the topic of research in addition to some biographic data (e.g. level of TL proficiency, age, gender). The scaling questionnaire has 5-point Likert scale (“strongly disagree” – 1; “disagree” – 2; “undecided” – 3; “agree” – 4; “strongly agree” – 5). The surveys were supposed to be filled out by 417 students, but 400 samples were retrieved through electronic mail. This part of the research took about ten working days to complete.

Qualitative data was collected with the help of semi-structured interviews. This type of interview assists researchers in conducting a comprehensive investigation of a specific question. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the data collection method, as the researcher has to cover a topic that might have controversial answers. It is also possible that educators have more knowledge about the topic that the researcher did not take into account. In other words, it was important to conduct as full and as comprehensive research of the bilingual approach as possible. Interviews were conducted at a previously planned time convenient for the interviewees. Each interview lasted for about 30 minutes. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed by using the SPSS statistical package in Microsoft Excel. The researcher used descriptive statistics to determine the importance of a bilingual approach (using L1 in the classroom) for the students in the EFL classroom. In addition, the study applied correlational analysis between the TL proficiency of participants and the attitude towards using L1 in the classroom. Qualitative information was analyzed manually by using simple coding. After transcription of data, the researcher retrieved several codes, descriptions, and examples. Interpretation of coded information followed the analysis.

Reliability and Validity

The study recruited a relatively large number of participants that ensured the generalizability of the results. To decrease sample bias, participants were randomly selected among the target audience by considering the homogeneity of the sample. Validity was also ensured by targeting the phenomenon that the study aimed at measuring, namely, the significance of a bilingual teaching approach for students. Reliability was ensured by using enough questions to evaluate the competence of the participants. Specifically, questions in semi-structured interviews were the same or similar to prevent any inconsistencies. In order to validate the new original survey, it was reviewed by a group of experts. After their review, several aspects of the questionnaire were revised. The reliability of the quantitative tool was ensured by calculating Chronbach’s alpha (Appendix C).
Ethics

Participation in the survey and interviews was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were not allowed to discuss their answers with other people and other respondents. Each respondent had the ability to refuse to participate or withdraw her/his data from the research at any stage of the process. Personal data was retrieved from participants except for their age, gender, level of TL proficiency (students) and years of experience (teachers). This information was critical for the research and added credibility to the results. Sensitive topics were not addressed during the study. However, teachers had a chance to provide suggestions, recommend changes, and criticize the current system of teaching that could have potentially affected their careers. Thus, the researcher decided to mark participating educators with a letter to conceal their identities.

Limitations of the Study

The study has certain limitations. Specifically, the researchers recruited a small number of interviewees, which could affect the chances to generalize the results. Due to the time constraints and limited number of highly trained educators, the number was limited to five interviewees. Due to same time constraints, it was impossible to develop a larger and more comprehensive survey that would control confounding variables and eliminate potential bias.

Results

Quantitative Study

Biographic Data

The majority of the student respondents represent the younger age group (18-20) due to the typical age of the students in the university as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Characteristics of the study sample in terms of age.

Figure 2 reveals that the majority of the participants were females (63%) and the rest were males (37%).

Figure 2. Characteristics of the study sample in terms of participants’ gender.
Figure 3 indicates that the majority of the respondents had basic level of English (53.8%), lower number of participants had independent level of English (38.8%), and the rest of the group had a proficiency level of (7.5%).

**Figure 3.** Characteristics of the study sample in terms of proficiency level of English.

**RQ 1:** What are the students’ attitudes towards using L1 in EFL classes?

**Table 1.** *Participants’ attitudes towards using L1 in EFL classes.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Mean (M)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (SD)</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I would prefer my teacher using Arabic in my English class when</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explaining new vocabulary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I would prefer my teacher using some Arabic in my English class when</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she gives instructions to the class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I would prefer my teacher using some Arabic in my English class when</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explaining a new grammar topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I would prefer my teacher allowing me to use Arabic in my English class</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during the reading comprehension tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I would prefer my teacher allowing me to use Arabic in my English class</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>while discussing errors I make in the writing assignments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would prefer my teacher allowing me to use Arabic in my English class</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during the listening comprehension tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I use Arabic when I have to explain something related to my English</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lessons to my classmates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I use Arabic during my English classroom when I exchange some personal</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information with my classmates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I use Arabic during group work tasks since it helps us finish the task</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faster.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. illustrates that the mean average for the answers of the EFL respondents about their attitudes towards using L1 in the EFL classes was positive (M =3.75, S.D.=1.21). The participants depicted positive attitudes towards the above items because their mean was greater than the mean of the Likert Scale. The highest mean in this table is given to item (4) “I would prefer my teacher allowing me to use Arabic in my English class during the reading comprehension tasks.” (M=4.14, S.D.=1.02). Item (8) “I use Arabic during my English classroom when I exchange some personal information with my classmates.” proved to be the situation in which the respondents least preferred to use their L1 (M=3.25, S.D.=1.32).
RQ 2: What is the relation between the students’ proficiency level and their tendency to use L1 in the EFL classroom?

The correlation between the proficiency level of the participant students and tendency to use L1 in EFL classroom is shown below:

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the relation between the students’ Proficiency Level and their tendency to use L1 in the EFL classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Basic Importance</th>
<th>Independent Importance</th>
<th>Proficient Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 2, the overwhelming majority of respondents with the basic level of TL admitted the importance of using L1 in an EFL classroom (M = 4.46; SD = 0.62). Participants with an average TL level also considered using L1 in the classroom as important (M = 4.09; SD = 0.94). However, those with proficient TL level acknowledged that using L1 was not important (M = 2.06; SD = 0.90). At the same time, it is clear that the proficient students are the minority in this sample and in the University in general, which requires taking into account their point of view with caution.

RQ 3: When do the EFL students prefer L1 to be used in the classroom?

As Figure 4 demonstrates, students especially value the use of L1 by their teacher when she/he explains a new topic (M = 4.02; SD = 1.01) and reported an almost equal inclination towards implementing L1 when it comes to their reading comprehension tasks (M = 4.14; SD = 1.02). The participants also favored the integration of L1 in the EFL classroom by their teachers in the case of introducing new vocabulary items (M= 3.71, S.D. = 1.25). The participants also rated high penchant towards their teachers’ sandwiching some L1 while giving in-class instructions (M= 3.68, S.D. = 1.62). The results reported that students would rather receive feedback on their writing tasks in L1 (M= 3.56, S.D. = 1.24) and went for getting some L1 assistance concerning listening comprehension tasks (M= 3.56, S.D. = 1.39). The participants admitted that they use L1
more commonly when they explain something to their classmates (M = 4.13; S.D. = 0.90). The figures also highlight the fact that L1 is allowed space in the cases of exchanging in-class personal information (M = 3.25; S.D. = 1.32).

**Qualitative Data**

The following table includes the biographic data of the participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 2, all interviewees have significant experience in education and teaching students English in EFL classrooms. The majority of interviewees were females. The years of experience ranged from eight to 21 years.

**RQ 4:** What are the teachers’ attitudes towards using L1 in EFL classes?

To answer this question, the qualitative data gained through the semi-structured interviews with the five educators were analyzed manually by using simple coding. After transcription of data, the researcher retrieved several codes, their descriptions, and examples. Interpretation of coded information is categorized in Table 3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual vs. Bilingual</td>
<td>The majority of participants support the use of bilingual approach in the classroom.</td>
<td>“I think that monolingual approach decreases the speed of English acquisition in the classroom” (A); “I have used L1 in my EFL classes throughout my career” (D).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual-Use</td>
<td>Teachers use L1 to explain vocabulary, new terms, unknown phrases, and interpret the difference between TL and L1.</td>
<td>“When a student is struggling with understanding a new word, it is easier to find an equivalent or explain the term in Arabic” (C); “I find it quicker and more effective to use Arabic when students cannot understand basic concepts in English” (B).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual-Benefits</td>
<td>Educators admit that a bilingual approach is more time-efficient, adjustable, and flexible in use.</td>
<td>“For example, I provide printed cards to struggling students in Arabic explaining new words to save time” (E); “When giving instructions, L1 should be used for it saves time and ensures that all students have understood what to do. It is impossible and inaccurate not to resort to Arabic in this situation” (D).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual-Drawbacks</td>
<td>Some teachers also admitted certain flaws in a bilingual approach</td>
<td>“You have to be careful with using the native language in the classroom, especially when there are proficient or gifted students” (C); “Sometimes, using Arabic in the classroom for a couple of students, who do not comprehend the material, is counterproductive” (E).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology-Change</td>
<td>Several educators admitted they would make methodology more adaptable</td>
<td>“I can see that the methods are too standardized and I cannot attend to the needs of all students” (B); “Methodology has to become more applicable and realistic to match the modern demands to English use” (A).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 3 reveals, the majority of the interviewees advocate for using L1 in the EFL classroom. Several participants admitted that they used L1 during their entire career even though there are still debates that consider this approach controversial. All respondents admitted the benefits of a bilingual approach by emphasizing its adaptability, flexibility, and time-efficiency. None of the participants supported a radical banishment of L1 in the EFL classroom, yet, they admitted that the bilingual approach has to be implemented situationally. As several interviewees claimed, students prefer a bilingual approach when they struggle to understand some idioms or concepts in English as the target language (TL). The majority of participants characterized the current methodology of a total rejection of L1 as rigid and only partially effective. The recommendations to those opposed to bilingual teaching included a suggestion to consider the students’ interests and consider their needs as the main priority. Overall, all interviewees supported the use of L1 in the EFL classroom.

Discussion

The study addressed the students’ attitudes towards implementing L1 in their EFL classes, the spaces in the EFL classroom where L1 is preferably used, the relation between student’s proficiency level and their inclination to use their mother tongue, and the teachers’ attitude towards implementing L1 in the EFL classrooms. Concerning the first question “What is the students’ attitude towards using L1 in EFL classes?”, the statistical analysis employed proved that the sample students are strong supporters of engaging their mother tongue in the learning process taking place in their EFL classrooms (M.=3.75, S.D.=1.21). This result supports previous studies like Galali and Cinkara (2017), Tajgozari (2017), Hennebry’s (2016) and Hlas (2016). However, this result is not in line with Izguirdo, Marteniz, Pulido and Zuniga (2016) nor Giannikas (2011). As for the second question “What is the relation between the students’ proficiency level and their tendency to use L1 in EFL classes?”, the results of the present study proved the presence of a positive relation between the two variables. This result supports the findings of Ali (2020), De La Fuenta and Goldsberg (2020), Boustani (2019) and Pan and Pan (2010) opposes Giannikas (2011). Coming to the third question “When do the participant students prefer L1 to be used in EFL classes?” the questionnaire developed by the researcher can form square one from which we can launch our efforts as EFL educators and methodologists to determine when and how to allow enough space for L1 in the EFL classrooms. Such surveys allow students, as well, to gain more understanding of how they learn English and elevate their self-image as successful learners who are doing nothing wrong when resorting to L1 in their efforts to learn English. As the results showed, the participant students demonstrated a high inclination for using L1 by their teachers when introducing a new grammar topic and when a new reading comprehension task is tackled. These finding support studies by Ull (2020), Galali and Cinkara (2017) though does not fully go along with Hall & Cook (2013) and Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2011).

The participants’ high inclination towards the use of L1 in the classroom concerning vocabulary learning supports studies by Pan and Pan (2010); Boustani (2019), Galali and Cinkara (2017), Afzal (2012) and Al-Musawi (2014). The results obtained by Krieger (2005) are not in line with the present study, however. The sample students highly valued using L1 by their teachers while giving instructions. Simplifying any in-class instructions through using an L1 explanation helps students understand the task better, do it correctly in a shorter time without
causing their teacher to repeat the instructions more than once in English supporting Kampa and Nassaji (2009), Koucka (2007) and Tanış, Sensoy and Atay (2020).

The findings related to the use of L1 when it comes to the writing and listening tasks show an equal tendency by the participants. Students prefer to get an idea in their L1 about the listening text to be dealt with as well as to get some meanings clarified. This supports studies by Galili and Cinkara (2017) and De La Campa and Nassaji (2009). The survey results have also depicted that the participants preferred to receive feedback related to their writing tasks in their L1, supporting studies by Hidayati (2012) and Galali and Cinkara (2017).

According to the results of the present study, students with a basic proficiency level preferred using L1 in the classroom compared to proficient students, for whom the bilingual approach was not important. The current findings support the findings of previous studies and scholarly research conducted by Almoayidi (2018); Jadallah and Hasan (2014). The results partially supported the findings of Hanáková and Metruk (2017) by claiming that students with a basic proficiency level were more likely to use L1 in the classroom. The findings partially supported the claim by Alrabah et al. (2015), implying that students were especially more enthusiastic concerning the importance of a bilingual approach than educators. Results related to the fourth question “What are the teachers’ attitudes towards using L1 in EFL classes?”, demonstrated that teachers do integrate Li in their EFL classes when giving instructions, explaining difficult grammar and teaching vocabulary. Thay wanted this approach to be systematized and included in the teacher-training programs. These findings go hand in hand with Kohi and Lakshmi (2020), Macaro and Lee (2013) and Jingxia (2010). The results obtained in this study do not support the scholarly research carried out by De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) and Murga et al. (2018) demonstrating that educators are in opposition to using L1 in the EFL classrooms. In general, the results of current research supported the contemporary tendency of including L1 in the EFL classroom with both students and educators admitting its benefits. These findings imply that modern universities have to consider changing its course and allowing students as well as teachers to use L1 when needed.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the demands to the knowledge of English are increasing across the globe, which requires a more productive and effective teaching methodology. This study tried to shed brighter light on the future of L1 in the EFL classroom. It studied the attitudes of learners and educators towards its integration. Both sides depicted positive attitudes towards a bilingual approach as it facilitates the learning process. The participant students in the current study preferred using L1 to secure better comprehension of difficult areas in grammar, reading texts, new vocabulary when given instructions. Students have to be able to learn English in a safe and stimulating environment that monolingual approaches can no longer guarantee. Thus, methodologists and teachers have to be more attentive to the needs of students and update their approaches and strategies accordingly.

Recommendation for Future Research

The researchers encourage educators interested in the future of L1 in English classrooms to conduct lengthy studies that compare the achievement of classes taught only in English with ones where logical space for L1 is provided. A good starting point here could be An Updated Review
on Use of L1 in Foreign Language Classroom by Shin, Dixon and Choi (2019) and Butzkamm and Caldwell’s (2009) The Building Reform: A Paradigm in Foreign Language Teaching. Other studies could dig deeper to prove whether employing L1 in the English classroom could save the teaching time and boost the students’ self-esteem. Bondarenko’s (forthcoming) Rethinking Authenticity in SLA from the Perspective of L2 Use can form an important and useful resource in this area.

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**Appendix A**

**Survey Questionnaire**

**Part I: Biographic Information**

1. Please, state your gender: male   female

2. Please, state your age:

3. Please, state your level of English proficiency: basic independent proficient

**Part II: Opinions on Bilingual Teaching Approach**

State your opinion of the statements by evaluating them according to the following scale: 
“strongly disagree” “disagree” “undecided” “agree” “strongly agree”

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I would prefer my teacher using Arabic in my English class when explaining new vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I would prefer my teacher using some Arabic in my English class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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when she gives instructions to the class.

3. I would prefer my teacher using some Arabic in my English class when explaining a new grammar topic.

4. I would prefer my teacher allowing me to use Arabic in my English class during the reading comprehension tasks.

5. I would prefer my teacher allowing me to use Arabic in my English class while discussing errors I make in the writing assignments.

6. I would prefer my teacher allowing me to use Arabic in my English class during the listening comprehension tasks.

7. I use Arabic when I have to explain something related to my English lessons to my classmates.

8. I use Arabic during my English classroom when I exchange some personal information with my classmates.

9. I use Arabic during group work tasks since it helps us finish the task faster.

Appendix B

Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

1. Please, state your age, gender, and years of experience.
2. What is your opinion on monolingual and bilingual teaching approaches? Please, explain.
3. Which of them do you prefer to use in EFL classroom? Why?
4. When and in what situations (if you do) do you use L1 (Arabic) in the classroom? If you do not use, please, explain why do you prefer monolingual/bilingual approach?
5. Which approach do your students prefer more, bilingual or monolingual? How would you explain their preference?
6. What changes would you do to the EFL teaching methodologies if you have a chance?
7. What is your opinion on the growing demand of using L1 in EFL classrooms?
8. What would you recommend teachers who oppose using L1 in the classroom? (Optional question: if the participant supports bilingual approach).

Appendix C

Reliability of the Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Processing Summary</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.834</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher-Centered Approach Prevalence in Algerian Secondary-School EFL Classes: The Case of English Teachers and Learners in Mostaganem District

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Abstract
Before implementing the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in 2003, the Algerian educational system was based on traditional teaching methods that focused mainly on acquiring the knowledge about language delivered by the teacher and the amount of information the learner could accumulate to pass the exams. Although CBA has shifted the teacher’s role from a knowledge transmitter to a facilitator and the learner from a passive recipient to an active participant, the teacher-centered paradigm still prevails among secondary-school teachers. To shed light on that prevalence, the researcher attempts to explore the perceptions secondary-school teachers hold about Teacher-Centred Approach (TCA) and the reasons behind its widespread use. Therefore, the present study investigates the causes of TCA prevalence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes using a mixed-methods approach. To reach that aim, the researcher put forward the following hypothesis. Although teachers know the various teaching approaches, they have to adopt the teacher-centered method because of several constraints. To collect the necessary data to identify those constraints, thirty English teachers from some secondary schools in the district of Mostaganem received a questionnaire. The research results confirmed the hypothesis stated above. They revealed that teachers are well-informed about the viability of various teaching approaches and methods; however, they keep adopting the teacher-centered approach. Such behavior is due to multiple constraints such as classrooms crowdedness, the traditional physical classroom environment, the baccalaureate (BAC) exam requirements, and the time restrictions due to the lengthy English programs.

Keywords: Algerian secondary-school EFL classes, competency-based approach (CBA), teacher-centered approach prevalence, traditional teaching methods
Cite as: Baghoussi, M . (2021). Teacher-Centred Approach Prevalence in Algerian Secondary-School EFL Classes: The Case of English Teachers and Learners in Mostaganem District. Arab World English Journal, 12 (2) 268-278. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no2.18
1. Introduction

Educational systems reforms aim at updating learning goals and objectives to make them more consistent with the needs of 21st-Century individuals, society, and the world. The educational reforms Algeria has put in train since 2002 aim to help our students acquire the necessary skills and competencies to face 21st-century challenges. Since English is the most widely spoken language globally and a language extensively used in scientific and technological fields, the Ministry of National Education (MNE) has integrated it in middle and secondary school education, where learners spend seven years learning it. To highlight its importance, the English curriculum designers note that Algeria’s English teaching aims to plunge learners into the modern world. It also allows them to interact with the world communities, share and exchange ideas in different fields, understand each other and live in peace.

Before 2003, the Algerian educational system was based on the following teaching approaches: the Aural-Oral Approach, Objective-Based Approach, and the communicative approach. To overcome the deficiencies in the previous approaches, the MNE opted to adopt the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in 2003. This approach embeds the Learner-Centred Approach (LCA) principles, and it derives from the constructivist theories of learning. Those approaches “take students seriously as active participants in their own learning, fostering transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and reflective thinking” (Attard et al., 2010, p.5).

To highlight the effectiveness of the CBA, the MNE (2006) states that the competency-based program offers learning situations and situations of integration that put learners at the center of the learning process and involve them in knowledge self-appropriation, which is a characteristic related to LCA. Those learning situations encourage learners’ initiative and foster their creativity. They also encourage them to use various learning strategies and reinvest their acquired knowledge in real-life situations to solve problems. Besides, the program designers have integrated the project work and the group work pedagogy within the teaching process to raise learners’ sense of autonomy and responsibility. They have also urged teachers to use Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in classrooms and encourage their learners to use those tools to prepare and present their projects. Besides, assessment has become less teacher-based, and learners can assess themselves (self-assessment) and assess their peers (peer-assessment). In such an environment, the teacher’s role shifts from the knowledge possessor and provider to a facilitator and guide who creates a learning atmosphere that generates autonomy and gives learners opportunities to work in groups, collaborate, experiment, and discuss.

Although the English curriculums and CBA encompass the learner-centered approach and learner autonomy principles, teachers are still resistant to change and keep using the traditional teacher-centered teaching styles. Their utmost aim is to cover all of the curriculums and make students memorize as much content as possible so that they will be able to regurgitate it in exams, especially the BAC exam. The present paper investigates teachers’ degree of awareness on the advantages of the learner-centered teaching approaches and the causes behind the TCA prevalence in secondary-school EFL classes. Eventually, the investigation results could help raise teachers’ awareness about the drawbacks of TCA overuse and prevalence.
2. Literature Review

2.1. Characteristics of TCA

Over the last few decades, the education field has undergone a steady transition from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches in delivering content and assessing. The teacher-centered method is mainly associated with traditional approaches to language teaching and learning, where “the instructor directs how, what, and when students learn” (Dupin-Bryant, 2004, p.42). Such a context conveys two images. In the first one, teachers are standing up “[...]on their feet in the front of the room with eyes open, asking questions, making points, gesturing, writing key ideas on the board, encouraging, correcting, demonstrating, and so forth” (Schug, 2013, p.94); in the second one, students are submissively sitting in desks, listening attentively and taking notes. As for the content to be taught, the educational institutions decide on how it should be taught (methods/approaches) and assessed (standardized tests) and which resources should be used (textbooks). Therefore, teachers are required to put into practice their institutions’ plans and recommendations.

To define the teacher-centered approach, scholars have provided many descriptions. Otukile-Mongwaketse (2018) asserts that “when education is teacher-centered, the teacher retains full control of the classroom and its activities” (p.12). Therefore, control is predominant, and “authority is transmitted hierarchically” (Dollard et al., 1996, p.3); besides, while “designing the class activities, teachers control every single learning experience” (Emaliana, 2017, p.60). Muganga and Ssenkusu (2019) define it as “an educational system based upon rote learning and memorization” (p.16). Most scholars affirm that teachers transmit the course content to be memorized to students through lectures, notes, or handouts provided by the teacher. Moreover, to assess their ability to reproduce the teacher-delivered material, teachers give the students summative assessments in a standardized test form. To motivate students, teachers rely primarily on extrinsic motivation. Kitiashvili (2020) states that "teacher-centered pedagogy is linked with top-down and hierarchal pedagogy" (p.553). According to her, teachers are like experts who transmit knowledge to novices. Additionally, they take that knowledge blindly from specific textbooks that are mainly grammar-based and which both the teachers and learners are constrained to use. Toh K. A. (1994) gives a detailed description of the teacher-centered methodology and environment:

- Teacher talk exceeds student talk during instruction;
- Instruction is mostly with the entire class;
- Textbooks guide what is being taught in class;
- Each episode within the lesson is determined by the teacher;
- Desks and chairs are usually arranged into neat rows facing the chalkboard;
- Students are not free to roam from their seats (p.13).

2.2. TCA Foundations

The way people learn has always been the primary concern of educational psychologists. They shared their different thoughts on how people learn. The researches in this field have given birth to many pedagogical approaches. The main ones are behaviorism, constructivism, and social constructivism. The TCA has its roots in behaviorism. At the beginning of the 20th century, behaviorism took a predominant role in psychology. Behaviorists focus on the changes occurring in behavior due to stimuli (learning), but they ignore the internal thought processes as
elements of actions. They also stipulate that what human beings learn is due to their interaction with the physical environment in which they live. Their theories minimize the influence of the innate or inherited factors on behavior; therefore, they focus not only on objectively observable behaviors but also on quantifiable and observable events. They believe that any reliable scientific research should rely on visible indicators and that the mind’s independent activities are not to be considered. That belief has given another dimension to psychology, allowing psychologists to undertake multiple measurement types to understand some behaviors. Three notable behaviorists who made their names over the years are Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner.

2.2.1. Pavlov’s Classical Conditioning Theory

Ivan P. Pavlov (1849-1936), a doctor and physiologist, was the first researcher who introduced the conditioning concept. His famous experiments on dogs have helped us understand behaviorism that is based on the stimulus-response paradigm. The scientific results Pavlov obtained influenced Watson and helped him justify the validity of his beliefs. In those experiments with a dog, Pavlov found out that the dog started to salivate each time he showed it food. Consequently, he concluded that salivation is a natural and innate process, and the unconditioned response is due to an unconditioned stimulus. To go further in his experiment, Pavlov then used a bell as an ‘artificial’ stimulus. Each time he wanted to feed the dogs, he rang a bell. After doing that for a certain period, the dog started to salivate when hearing the bell, even if the food was not available. That reaction is called a conditioned response. This kind of learning is also called Learning by Conditioning. Pavlov’s work on classical conditioning has contributed significantly to the development of the behaviorism school of psychology.

Classical conditioning allows teachers to use it in various ways in the classroom. In such an environment, students are considered empty vessels, and in this case, teachers will mold them according to the desired profile by exposing them to specific stimuli. For example, students’ unconditioned behaviors, such as working alone or keeping silent, can be conditioned and changed into collaborative and participative behaviors. Therefore, teachers could use classical conditioning to install excellent and favorable behaviors in the classroom.

Although Pavlov’s theory had a tremendously positive influence on psychology, it has faced much criticism. The following are the most widespread ones:
• The theory is deterministic and does not allow for individuals’ free will;
• It underestimates the uniqueness of human beings;
• Numerous environment variables can impact a person’s reaction;
• Conditioned behaviors disappear if the expected outcome is no longer available.

2.2.2. Watson’s Learning Theory

John B. Watson (1878-1958), the founder of the behaviorist theory, disagreed with the idea that heredity determined how a person behaved; he believed that people’s overall learning experiences were the elements that determined how they reacted in various situations. Through the experiments Watson performed, he showed that he could condition or train a child to respond the way he wanted him to do. In this context, he said:
Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I’ll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select - doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations and the race of his ancestors (Watson, 1924, p.104).

2.2.3. Skinner’s Operant Conditioning Theory
Contrary to Pavlov and Watson’s theories, Skinner (1938) believed that behavior is not influenced by the action that comes before it but rather by the causes and consequences of a particular action. That is what he called operant conditioning. This model outlines four methods of conditioning that could modify behavior. Ackerman (2020) summarized those methods as follows:

1. Positive reinforcement: a desirable stimulus is introduced to encourage certain behavior.
2. Positive punishment: an undesirable stimulus is introduced to discourage the behavior.
3. Negative reinforcement: an undesirable stimulus is removed to encourage the behaviour.
4. Negative punishment (also called extinction): a desirable stimulus is removed to discourage the behaviour (para. 2).

According to this approach, behavior that is followed by positive reinforcement, i.e., what a subject likes, is likely to happen again. However, if it is followed by negative reinforcement, i.e., what a subject hates, it is less likely to be repeated another time. In this case, “extension is the discontinuation of behaviors that had been encouraged by either negative or positive reinforcement” (Speaks, 2019). Therefore, the key elements of operant conditioning are reinforcement, punishment, and extension.

2.3. Behaviorism Limitations
The core element in the theories mentioned above is the teacher; therefore, her/his presence in the learning environment is crucial and necessary. That necessity transforms the classroom into a teacher-centered one where the teacher transfers information to students primarily through lecturing and strategies that place students’ behavior under stimulus control (Brophy, 1999). While adopting such an approach, teachers spend most of the time explaining to students how they should respond to the target stimuli. During the learning process, where the teacher imposes authority, students are silent, attentive, and passively listening to the teacher’s everlasting talks. The teacher uses those repetitive explanations on purpose. They give an idea to the students about the desired behavior to adopt or the information the teacher wants them to acquire and regurgitate in exams. With the emergence of constructivism in the mid-1990s, the behavioral approach faced some controversies. Ballard (1987) states that “a review of theory and research suggests, however, that the behavioral task analysis, the stimulus-response approach is not an appropriate nor effective model for interactive teaching” (p.197). Consequently, experiential, autonomous, collaborative, creative, technology-based, and problem-solving learning does not take place in such an environment since the teacher holds complete control on learners’ learning process and “assumes primary responsibility for the communication of knowledge to students” (Mascolo, 2009, p.4). In the same context, Ballard (1987) adds that “behavioural methods present problems because they emphasize the control of learning by the instructor, thus devaluing pupil initiation...” (p.197).
3. Methodology

3.1. Method

To investigate the prevalence of the teacher-centered approach in secondary-school English classes, the researcher adopted a mixed methods research. The researcher used a questionnaire directed to thirty secondary-school English teachers to collect the required information.

3.2 Participants

The informants were all active secondary-school English teachers in the district of Mostaganem, Algeria. The majority (95%) of the informants who participated in the survey were females, but only a few (05%) were males. The informants’ age ranged between 24 and 48, and their teaching experience varied between two and twenty-five years.

3.3. Research Tool

The questionnaire handed to teachers contains five closed-ended, sixteen open-ended questions, and eleven sub-questions. It is composed of three main parts. The first part investigates the physical classroom environments and their populations; the second one explores the teachers’ background knowledge on teaching approaches and the extent to which they put into practice those approaches. The last part examines the current teachers’ teaching methodology and practices applied in classrooms by teachers.

4. Findings, Discussion, and Analysis

4.1. Population and Classrooms Environment

The data revealed that most participants (80%) worked in rural secondary schools in the first part of the questionnaire. The majority (70%) had crowded classes of more than thirty students per class; whereas, 30% of them had between twenty to thirty students in their classrooms. Such crowdedness engendered many problems and influenced teachers’ practice. The following table gives more details about the drawbacks of over-crowdedness on teachers and students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over-Crowdedness Drawbacks</th>
<th>Teachers’ Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A lot of stress/fatigue</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impossibility to use active learning strategies: group work, role-plays...</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of focus and concentration among students</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of individual attention to every student</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-consuming/wasting</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment difficulties</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad students’ results</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems of discipline/control</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management difficulty</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impossibility to finish lessons/program</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of participation/engagement</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much noise</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of homework</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked about the difficulties they encounter in overcrowded classrooms, the highest percentages referred to the amount of stress and fatigue those classrooms engender and the difficulties teachers find in using active learning strategies like group work, role-plays, and
games. The other hindrances cited by teachers were the lack of focus and concentration among students, lack of individual attention to every student, the impossibility to finish the program due to time shortage, assessment difficulties, bad students’ results, discipline and control problems, and other problems that Table 1 displays.

Because of classroom crowdedness, almost all the Algerian schools adopt the traditional seating arrangement—aligned rows facing the board. Almost all schools in Algeria adopt such a design. However, teachers can change it according to their needs during their practice before they start their lessons. In this context, most of the respondents (80%) stated that they kept using the traditional model, but the minority noted that they adopted other class layout options: roundtable and semicircle.

4.2. Teachers’ Background Knowledge on Teaching Approaches

The responses in the second part of the questionnaire stipulate that almost all the respondents (97%) are knowledgeable about the teaching approaches that foster teacher-centredness and hinder learner-centredness.

Figure 1. Teachers’ Knowledge Extent about Teaching Approaches

Since the Algerian educational curriculums adopt the Competency-Based Approach, teachers have a clear theoretical idea about it. In their responses to the question related to the CBA definition, the respondents’ responses revolved around the process of helping learners to develop their skills and competencies rather than filling their minds with foundational knowledge. As for the TCA and LCT approaches, all the respondents provided suitable definitions. They defined TCA as a traditional approach if it is overused. Some of their responses highlighted the predominance of the teacher in the classroom and the roles he plays: all day long lecturer, the sole information provider, assessor and evaluator, and curriculum transmitter. On the other hand, they defined LCT as an approach that shifts learners’ roles from passive knowledge receivers to active participants responsible for their learning. In such a classroom environment, the teacher becomes a guide, facilitator, and prompter.

4.3. Teachers’ Teaching Methodology and Practice

In this section, the researcher focused on the teaching approaches, strategies, and classroom materials. Concerning the first question of this section, which investigates the teaching approach teachers adopt most of the time in class, most respondents (63%) stated that they use the LCT approach. However, the analysis of the subsequent questions contradicts this answer and shows that teachers use the TCA most of the time. However, those (37%) who said they prefer using the
TCA quoted that it is less time-consuming, enabling them to finish the program on time. They also added that it fits the slow learners and helps teachers control their classes effectively.

Concerning the second question related to teachers' frequent position in the classroom, most respondents (67%) said they always stand up near the blackboard facing students. Such a position implies that the teacher plays the role of the sage on the stage who owns knowledge and transmits it to students through the perpetual chalk and talk method. However, the rest of the respondents (33%) preferred taking different classroom positions during the lesson.

![Figure 2. Teachers' Position in the Classroom](image)

The respondents’ answers stipulated that teachers rarely use those materials and techniques because of classroom crowdedness and the engendered noise.

In the seventh question, which focuses on students’ motivation extent to learn English, their answers varied between slightly and very motivated. According to them, the literary streams are less motivated than the scientific ones. They stated that such lack of interest is mainly due to the unsuitable streaming of students. However, none of their responses referred to the teacher’s responsibility in students’ motivation enhancement. The analysis of the eighth question will support this hypothesis.

When asked whether teachers encourage competitiveness among students in the eighth question, all (100%) answered positively. The following table gives details about how the respondents urged students to be competitive.
Table 2. Teachers’ Ways of Encouraging Competitiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competitiveness Encouragement Ways</th>
<th>Teachers’ Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I give students quizzes and tests.</td>
<td>53 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give good/extra marks to those who do well.</td>
<td>90 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give rewards to those who do well.</td>
<td>37 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage and praise those who do well.</td>
<td>86 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give remarks to those who do not do well.</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, teachers’ responses to this question show that the traditional teacher-centered paradigm influences their methodology. Instead of encouraging collaboration and cooperation, they prefer motivating students extrinsically through grades, rewards, and teacher-ignited competitiveness that produce short-term effects on students. In this case, the risk of expecting positive responses from students without rewards could be higher. Therefore, teachers should foster students’ intrinsic motivation by creating a suitable learning environment that encourages them to develop their intrinsic motivation. Such an environment should be based on collaboration, students’ interests and needs, relevant positive feedback, and problem-solving strategies to ignite curiosity and challenges.

The ninth question investigates teachers’ utmost aim behind teaching. Most of the respondents (97%) chose the proposed aims; whereas, a few of them (03%) gave their aims:

- Help students learn and use the language communicatively in real-life contexts;
- Ensure life-long learning for students;
- Prepare students for the 21st century.

Table 3. Teachers’ Utmost Aim Behind Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utmost Aims</th>
<th>Teachers’ Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help students pass the BAC exam.</td>
<td>54 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help students learn the program content.</td>
<td>33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help students get good grades in the school exams.</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other.</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results highlight the importance teachers give to the BAC exam results. This assumption is due to teachers’ pressure from parents and school authorities whose utmost aim is to have the highest numerical results in the BAC exam—an exam that is mainly based on content. Whether or not those students have built any life-long skills and competencies is nobody’s concern. In this context, the teacher has no other choice than to provide students with the necessary exam hints and teaching them the required content to help them pass the BAC exam. That is why teachers teach the program content rather than help students learn and develop skills. Therefore, since the teacher is the expert and sole knowledge provider, he must adopt the teacher-centered approach to save time and finish the program on the recommended time. Concerning the first and third-year English programs, time shortage is also a constraint that forces teachers to work hard to finish them on time. The following table confirms the hypothesis about time constraints due to the length of the English programs.
Table 4. *Obstacles Hindering the English Programmes Completion*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Teachers’ Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The lengthy programs.</td>
<td>70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ learning difficulties (slow learners).</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A large amount of content in the coursebook.</td>
<td>27 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class management difficulties.</td>
<td>07 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the tenth question about the obstacles that hinder the completion of the English programs, the respondents’ answers (70%) focused mostly on the length of the programs, especially the first and third-year ones. Half of the respondents (50%) considered students’ learning difficulties as an obstacle that hinders the completion of the programs. The rest of the answers revolved around the lengthy textbook content and the difficulties some teachers have to control their classes.

5. Conclusion

The Algerian English secondary-school programs are competency-based, and thus they recommend the use of active, cooperative, project-based, and problem-based methodology. However, in the field, teacher-centredness is still prevailing in classrooms. To investigate the causes of that prevalence, the researcher relied on both a questionnaire directed to English secondary school teachers and her experience as a teacher. The teachers’ questionnaire responses confirmed the present study hypothesis, which stipulates that teachers know the effectiveness of the various teaching approaches. However, they keep adopt the teacher-centred method because they encounter many constraints during their practice. The questionnaire results showed that classrooms crowdedness hinders the use of the learner-directed active learning strategies because of the noise and problems of discipline they engender in the classroom. The results also revealed that the traditional physical classroom environment (aligned chairs and tables facing the blackboard) and the teacher’s position (near the blackboard facing students) foster teacher centredness and lecturing. The respondents also referred to the content-based baccalaureate exam as a stimulant to the teacher-centred approach adoption since it urges them to teach the lengthy secondary-school English programs contents and finish them at the recommended time before the end of each year. Although the present study highlights one of the classroom practices that hinder the adoption of modern teaching approaches that develop students’ 21st-century skills, a question remains open for further research. How could we remedy teacher-centredness prevalence in Algerian secondary schools and produce a change in the current teaching paradigm?

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References


Dynamic Assessment: A Complementary Method to Promote EFL Learning

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Abstract
Although some assessment modes have proved successful, many learning problems encountered by low achieving learners need to be fixed by a more procedurally adequate remedial classroom assessment. Many EFL instructors adopt conventional and static modes of assessment rather than flexible and humanistic assessment modes. Hence, the study aims at examining how Dynamic Assessment that premises on Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development and advocates mediation through good social setting and practice can enhance EFL language learning. Accordingly, 25 EFL students pursuing the first level of an undergraduate course at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, formed the experimental group for the writing task and 20 for the Reading task. Pre-test and post-test were administered based on Browns’ Interventionist Model for writing task and Feuerstein’s Interactionist model for Reading Comprehension. In addition, an online questionnaire was distributed to 43 university teachers from Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University to elicit their opinion. Data were statistically analyzed using SPSS. The results show a significant relation between Dynamic Assessment and language learning. The implications of findings will be helpful in EFL classrooms and research.

Keywords: dynamic assessment, EFL learning, interactionist, interventionist, mediation

Introduction

In the 21st century, English has become an indispensable part of the educational curriculum in non-native English-speaking countries, (Piekkari, 2009). However, most of the instructors find the process of EFL teaching/learning very challenging. A significant body of research has proved that different factors make it a complicated process, Akbari(2015). Although tremendous efforts have been exerted to improve the teaching-learning process of English, EFL programs still fail to deliver as expected, and the EFL learners’ proficiency in English remains inadequate and below expectation (Fareh, 2010). Due to the negligence of the writing skill in the educational process and its challenging nature, writing is considered one of the most demanding skills for EFL students to learn. Grammar, spelling, punctuation, choice of words, organization, and familiarity with genres and rhetorical structures, negative transfer from native to the target language, and idiomatic expressions and collocations are the other factors that make the writing task difficult (Du, 2020; Derakhshan & Shirejini, 2015). Concerning Reading skills, the challenge lies in terms of vocabulary, morphological and phonological awareness, ambiguous words, unfamiliar vocabulary, and limited available time to cognitively process the text (Qrqez & Radzuwan, 2019). Unfortunately, most assessment techniques are product-oriented (evaluating the result or outcome based on descriptive scoring schemes). This type of assessment lacks solutions for low cognitive functioning and poor academic performance. Though assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, for determining whether the learning goals are met or not, most of the institutions still prefer conventional Summative Assessments to grade students by spotting what the students know at a specified point in time. Learners are expected to memorize a lot of information and recall the information in written tests. Hence, student learning is gauged based on content standards without providing the opportunity to think creatively and take active participation in the learning process. In addition, in cases where the institutions provide flexibility to the instructors to design tests, most EFL teachers do not have adequate knowledge and skill to adopt new assessment systems. As a result, many learners excel, as examinations focus mainly on memorization and rote learning. On the contrary, they do not do well when exam questions involve creativity, critical thinking, or problem-solving. Needless to say that to a great extent, the washback effect (assessment affecting teaching materials) hinders the adaptation of instruction to support students' learning. Thus, it is imperative to think beyond the Static Assessment methods due to the following limitations as stated by (States, Detrich, & Keyworth, 2018). First, they do not offer adequate information about learning processes and impaired cognitive functions that cause learning difficulties. Second, there is no provision for mediational strategies to facilitate learning. Therefore, due to rigid evaluation procedures, the learning potential of the low performers is either underestimated or ignored. Third, learners are described in general terms, and recommendations for prescriptive teaching and remedial learning strategies are not provided. In addition, static tests do not take into consideration the non-intellective factors i.e. intrinsic motivation, need for mastery, locus of control, anxiety, frustration, tolerance, self-confidence, and accessibility to mediation though these factors can to a great extent influence individual's cognitive performance. States et al. claim that Summative Assessment happens after instruction is over, and has little value as a diagnostic tool to guide teachers in making timely adjustments to instruction aimed at catching students who are falling behind. Hence, research finds little evidence to support it as a critical factor in improved student achievement as it does not provide teachers with vital information to use in designing remedial instruction.
The limitations of Static Assessments led to a shift from product-oriented traditional tests to process-oriented methods of holistic testing approaches with the focus on real-life tasks thus, promoting the participation of students, their peers, and teachers.

A Shift from Convergent to Divergent Techniques

As a solution to the instruction–assessment dualism, Vygotsky (1978) evolved sociocultural theory and stressed the concept of Zone of Proximal /potential Development (ZPD). According to (Beddows, 2016), the theory is based on the assumption that there are three stages of ZPD: Stage one: Tasks the learners can do by themselves. Stage two: Tasks the learners can do with assistance. This category includes tasks a person can’t work through by themselves but can work through with help, also known as their ZPD. Stage three: Tasks the learner cannot do even with assistance. This means the task is above their skill level and outside their ZPD. Thus, Beddows concludes that the Zone of proximal /potential development is the distance between the learner's current state of affairs and the next step. According to Vygotsky, cognitive abilities emerge from interactions in the world and are always mediated. Abilities do not mature on their own but instead result from individuals’ histories of engaging in activities with others and with cultural artifacts. Vygotsky’s socio–cultural theory stresses the fact that learners' abilities can be promoted by continually fine-tuning their mediation to the learners' changing needs. The Learning Theory Project Team at the University of Hongkong (2018), states that though Vygotsky (1978) did not use the term, 'scaffolding' while introducing the concept of the zone of proximal development, the use of scaffolding can be beneficial as it can be instrumental in pushing learners to accomplish complex and challenging tasks by adopting techniques, for instance, prompting, modeling or giving clues to provide enough support to achieve their proximal goals and gradually reducing the amount of aid as a learner's ability to complete a skill improves.

Process Approach

Irrespective of the specific abilities or interests of the learners it has been observed and recorded that when learners are provided with instructional designs with opportunities to actively
process information by manipulating, deciding, solving, and predicting information in productive ways, learning becomes more meaningful and learner-centered, and has a huge impact on the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of the learners. Nabhan (2016) claims that the process writing approach plays a significant role in improving writing skills. Based on the sociocultural theory and ZPD in particular, (Shabani, 2016) points out that Static assessment is an incomplete and unethical way of assessing learners' abilities. Whereas, Dynamic Assessment crystallizes not only learner's levels of abilities in terms of independent (present) but also, assisted (potential) abilities. Therefore, 'Dynamic Assessment is not an alternative but complementary to traditional psychometric assessment'. In addition, Samran and Mehdi (2018) stressed the significance of Dynamic assessment as a method to investigate and highlight the individual learner's possessed skills and potential development. According to Estaji and Ameri (2020), Dynamic Assessment (DA) is an implicit kind of assessment that most teachers and learners engage in during the class time. Dynamic Assessment, a term coined by Luria in 1961 (as cited in Poehner & Lantolf, 2010), is a kind of assessment that engages the teachers continuously whereby “assessment and instruction are a single activity” in which intervention is offered to diagnose and improve learner development at the same time. Estaji and Ameri claim that Dynamic Assessment (DA) is an assessment of a learner's perception, learning, thinking, and problem-solving, by an active teaching process. It aims to modify the learner’s cognitive functioning and to observe subsequent changes in learning and problem-solving patterns within the testing situation. According to (Ebadi and Yari, 2018), in DA, a two-way interactive relationship is developed between the teacher and the learner and both parties could initiate questions. According to (Rahbardar, Abbasi & Talaei, 2014), DA aims to a) assess the grasping capacity of the learner's principle underlying an initial problem and to solve it, (b) assess the nature and amount of teaching required to teach a learner a given concept, and (c) identify the specific deficient cognitive functions and non-intellective factors (i.e., need for mastery) that are responsible for low performance and how they can be modified modifiable by teaching. Thus, this method proved to be more beneficial than the static method of assessment and has been supported by a good number of researchers. For instance, Hidri (2019) proved that when compared to static assessment, the dynamic assessment was more effective as it improved the syntactic knowledge of the learners thereby developing the writing skills of the EFL students. Further, Adeline (2012) observed that DA procedures played a significant role in promoting learners' reading skills and realizing their learning potential.
Thus, many researchers consider Dynamic Assessment to be instrumental in enhancing the productivity of the EFL learners and boosting confidence.

**Nature of Dynamic Assessment**

Haywood and Lidz (2007) mention that DA is can be considered as a complement to standardized testing and not a substitute for it. It is presented as a broad approach and not as a particular test. DA is a shift from the conventional tests in terms of goals, testing processes, instruments used, interpretation of results, and test situations. Moreover, the criteria of change are different in DA about pre-to post-teaching gains, amount and type of teaching required, and the degree of transfer of learning. Instead of adapting the conventional measures of intelligence, DA is based on predicting future cognitive performance and the outcome of intervention programs.

**Types of Dynamic Assessment**

According to Haywood and Lidz, Vygotsky's concept of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Reuben Feuerstein's theory of Mediated Learning Experiences (MLE) served as the main conceptual bases for most of the DA elaboration. Dynamic assessment has different approaches. For instance: "graduated promptly", “testing the limit”, and the “mediated learning experience”. (Lantolf & Poehner(2007, p. 35). However, they differ based on the approach towards mediation. Dynamic assessment leads to mediation to help learners to reconsider the problems and also think through them. It enables the mediator to recognize the level of learners' understanding of relevant linguistic features. Its emphasis is on instruction. During mediation, the role of the mediator is to comfort consensus-building discussion.

The two most common models of mediation are discussed below:

**Feuerstein’s Interactionist Model**

Based on his experience with people with minimal education levels, Feuerstein concluded that human cognitive abilities are not fixed. Learners can develop their learning potential and can be classified through interventions i.e. performance can change through cognitive processes. Feuerstein (1978) claimed that Intelligence is not a static structure, but an open, dynamic system that can continue to develop throughout life. (According to his theory on Mediated Learning Experience (MLE), the learner keeps interacting with a more competent peer and selects, changes, amplifies and interprets the objects through mediations while the mediator expands, and interprets the learner's learning process. The theory also states that mere supervision and interaction between the learner and the instructor will not suffice the purpose. Therefore, the mediator is required to be a responsible, affectionate, knowledgeable, and competent intermediary between the learner and the mediated learning experience and must believe in their ability to change, making them see their learning potential. Thus, Feuerstein's model integrates assessment and instruction. The use of mediated learning as a way of integrating students into their environment consists of the transformation of all stimuli through an educator that orders them, organizes them, and modifies them to ensure a better understanding of the universe that surrounds them (Orru, 2003).
Brown’s Interventionist Model

This model is constructed based on the number of prompts required to extract the desired response. A student's learning potential is evaluated by the number of prompts needed to achieve the goal. Unlike, Feuerstein's model, mediation is ordered from most implicit to most explicit, resulting in a correct answer (Naeini & Duvall, 2012).

Sandwich Format

Ebadi and Yari (2017) maintained that this type of intervention is also called the "pretest-intervention/training-post-test" format. It has three stages: first, the pre-test, second, the mediation (instruction) stage finally, the post-test. As the mediation takes place between the pre-test and post-test phases, this format is called Sandwiched instruction. This format includes both individualized and group mediation. However, for group mediation, the instructions are more implicit and for individualized mediation, the instructions are more explicit.

Interventionist Cake Format

Ebadi and Yari (2017) highlighted that in this format, graded prompt support is provided to the learners like icing on a cake. Learners are given a series of questions. They face the next question only when they answer the previous question properly Leipzig Learning Test (LLT) developed by Guthke can be considered as an example of a well-developed interventionist approach. It includes a set of five standardized prompts from implicit to explicit for all learners. The learner's performance is evaluated based on the number of prompts used time taken. According to Lantolf and Poehner (2007), due to its focus on standardization, interventionist DA has high reliability.

The researchers derived numerous valuable inputs from previous studies related to the development of language skills among EFL learners through Dynamic and Formative Assessments. For instance, Rashidi and Nejad (2018) investigated the effect of Dynamic Assessment on the EFL Learners' Process Writing development. The results showed the experimental group's dynamic assessment scores were higher than the control group's scores. Hence, it was concluded that Dynamic Assessment significantly influenced participants' scores, and enhanced their writing ability. The results of the learners' interview assured that dynamic assessment could improve the learners' EFL process writing and their confidence. It also elevated their motivation in their writing ability. The effectiveness of Dynamic Assessment has been further enunciated by Hidri (2019). In addition, (Jafary, Nordin, and Mohajeri, 2012), explored the effect of dynamic assessment on learners' syntactic knowledge. The main concern of the study was the significant difference between Dynamic and Static Assessment and the possible role of these two forms of Assessment on the syntactic development of EFL learners. The results showed that the performance of the experimental group was better than the control group. Jafary et al. concluded that Dynamic Assessment outperformed in improving the syntactic knowledge of the learners. In addition, Adeline (2012) conducted a study on the effects of Dynamic Assessment on College EFL Learners' Reading Skills. The study showed that appropriately designed DA procedures played a significant role in promoting learners' reading skills and realizing their learning potential. It is an accepted and acknowledged fact that for EFL learners, motivation plays a very vital role in the learning process. In their study on the effect of Dynamic Assessment on EFL Learners’ Intrinsic Motivation, Zoghi and Malmeer (2013) concluded from
the results that incorporation of DA as a supplement procedure to classroom activities has a positive effect on EFL learners’ intrinsic motivation.

EFL learners find the target language to be very challenging. As a result, they require more guidance and extrinsic motivation than native speakers or ESL learners. Unfortunately, in traditional classrooms, instruction and assessment are not integrated. It is taken for granted that instruction is for the instructor and assessment is for the students. The success rate of learning is decided based on solo performance and grades are all that matter. The study stresses the fact that providing the learners with just the grades will not accelerate their learning and observance of solo performance is insufficient. This notion is supported by Kao (2020). The study states that one of the goals of language instruction is to support students’ ability to transfer their learning or apply what they have learned in school to another setting. Similarly, Dimitrios and Athanasia (2019) investigated learners' creative potential through Dynamic Assessment and concluded that mediation significantly improved the creative potential of the learners.

Though Dynamic Assessment has great potential for EFL classroom practices, there is limited substantial research showing that Dynamic Assessment could be a suitable assessment system in EFL classrooms. According to Jiang (2020), classroom assessment has received a growing interest in recent decades. Classroom practices, however, heavily rely on teachers' knowledge and decision-making. Jiang states teacher assessment literacy becomes a fundamental factor that contributes to the effectiveness of classroom assessment. Therefore, the study aims to discuss the importance of Dynamic Assessment in the EFL learning context, emphasizing the origins and principal concepts involved in the process. The current study is helpful for instructors as it shows the importance of a shift from conventional and static modes of assessment to a more flexible and humanistic assessment mode.

To address the above-mentioned issues, the following research questions have been formulated:
- Does Dynamic Assessment enhance EFL learning?
- In what sense does identification of learning gaps raise EFL learners’ learning awareness?
- How do EFL teachers play an effective role in Dynamic Classroom Assessment?

Methods
Participants and Research Procedures
In addition to the literature reviewed above, a mixed approach was adopted. First, an experimental design was adopted to see the effect of the dynamic assessment on EFL learning. The data was obtained through results of the pre-tests and post-tests of 50 EFL students pursuing the First level of an undergraduate course at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University and second, an online survey conducted for faculty, teaching different areas of English Language for the undergraduate students at Al Qassim University and Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Alkharj.

Mediation was based on Brown's (1982) Interventionist Model for Writing and Feuerstein's (1978) Interactionist model for Reading. In addition, the subjects' choice was justified by the consensus that teachers play a vital role and in fact, partake as mediators in the Dynamic Assessment process. The total number of respondents was 44. The questionnaire comprised of 17 statements, and a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure. The scope of the questionnaire centered around the study research questions. A few statements investigated participants'
opinions regarding the possibility/impossibility of augmenting language learning via Dynamic Assessment, a few focused on knowledge of learning gaps and learning awareness, while other statements revolved around the responsibility of instructors in Dynamic Assessment. Nine statements were made positive, while six were negative. The data was statistically analyzed using One-Sample T(test) and percentages. The section below presents data analysis and interpretation.

**Research Instruments**

To conduct this study, the research method design took the form of a sandwich format by Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002). First, the participants took a traditional static test as a pre-test where no mediation was provided. Second, the mediation was provided to the participants and, finally, a post-test was conducted. The design enabled the researchers to compare the participant’s performance before and after the mediation. Also, during the mediation phase, each participant was given time to record the reading strategies and reflections in the working portfolio.

The following steps were followed in the Essay Writing and Reading Sessions Step1. Pre-testing: The Writing course class comprised 50 students. Students were equally divided into two groups. Twenty-five students were part of the experimental group and the remaining 25 formed the control group. The pre-test was taken by both groups. The purpose of pre-testing was threefold as suggested by Estaji and Ameri (2020). First, to check the students' level of Writing skills before the course, second, to determine the areas of difficulty in the experimental group, and finally, to examine whether the learners in the experimental and control groups were homogeneous regarding their writing abilities. Learners' pre-tests were corrected and scored (on a scale ranging from zero to 15).

**Step Two: Treatment (Intervention)**

The researchers focussed on the experimental group. Based on the students' errors in the pre-test, the researchers first, provided comments and explicit explanations second, identified the areas of difficulty to deal with separately using DA techniques. By Haywood and Lidz (2007) and as mentioned by Estaji and Ameri (2020), twenty to thirty minutes from three sessions were reserved for incorporating Dynamic Assessment.

**Sample of the Intervention in the First Session**

The learners were asked to write a composition of about 300 words. The question assigned to them was: How would you like to rejuvenate yourself this summer? Hints/prompts and implicit explanations were provided to the learners based on Browns’ Interventionist Model.
Figure 3. Intervention model: Clues for writing task

Stage Three: Post-testing

In the two sessions, the students in both groups took the post-test, the purpose of which was twofold as suggested by Estaji and Ameri (2020), first, to measure the possible differences in the achievement of the learners, and second, to compare the differences between the learners of the two proficiency levels. Opportunities were provided for self-correction and peer correction. The post-tests were corrected and scored on a scale ranging from zero to 15. To investigate the general writing performance between two groups (control & experimental) in the post-test writing stage, an independent sample t-test was conducted on SPSS.

Results

Table 1. Group-sample statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.52</td>
<td>1.06581</td>
<td>34.2400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13.12</td>
<td>1.95399</td>
<td>38.6400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one shows that the mean score of the control group is 10.52, whereas the mean score of the experimental group is 13.12. The results of the study indicate that dynamic assessment significantly influenced participants' scores and improved their writing ability. Twenty out of twenty-five learners considered interventions to be effective they could write an organized composition once they received support and guidance. Three of twenty-five learners revealed that for the first time they had completed their writing task only because of the support they received through this method. One out of twenty-five learners found this approach a bit difficult. Although she managed to write in an organized way, yet it was to some extent challenging. Three high scorers revealed that the approach was not very useful as they have been intrinsically motivated to take up challenges and tried to improvise without taking much support and guidance. Thus, the results indicate that learners' potential can be tapped and enhanced through interventions.

The researchers adopted Feuerstein's Interactionist model in two Reading Sessions as it supports learning and especially caters to the cultural difference.

Step One: Pre-testing

The Reading course class comprised 40 students. Students were equally divided into two groups. 20 were part of the experimental group and the remaining 20 formed the control group.
Both groups took the pre-test. The purpose of pre-testing was threefold as suggested by Estaji and Ameri (2020): First, to check the students’ level of comprehending before the course second, to determine the areas of difficulty in the experimental groups, and third, to examine whether the learners in the experimental and control groups were homogeneous regarding their reading abilities. Eventually, learners' pre-tests were corrected and scored (on a scale ranging from zero to 15).

**Step Two: Treatment (Interaction)**

The researchers focused on the experimental group. Based on the students’ mistakes in the pre-test, the areas of difficulty were identified and then dealt with separately using DA techniques from the sessions for 20 minutes. In two sessions the following questions were discussed with the students in the form of interaction.

- Do you think an image at the beginning of a passage could help you in comprehending the text? How?
- Can we apply the same strategy to get different types of information from the passage?
- What should we do when we come across a new word and do not understand its meaning?
- When a comprehension passage is given should we read the passage first or the questions?
- What should we do if we come across a very lengthy word?
- Is it always essential to know the meaning of every word included in the passage

**Stage Three: Post-testing**

In the two sessions, the students in both groups took the post-test, the purpose of which was twofold: first, to measure the possible differences in the comprehension abilities of the learners in the groups second, to compare the differences between the learners of the two proficiency levels. Opportunities were provided for self-correction and peer correction. The post-tests were corrected and scored on a scale ranging from zero to 15. To investigate the comprehension performance between two groups (control & experimental) in the post-test stage, an independent sample t-test was conducted on SPSS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>-1.42109</td>
<td>18.2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.45</td>
<td>1.42109</td>
<td>24.9500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two indicates that the mean score of the control group is 10.30 whereas, the mean score of the experimental group is 12.45. From the difference, it is evident that learners' comprehension abilities could be enhanced through interactions. The results indicate that appropriately designed DA procedures could play a significant role in promoting learners’ reading skills and realizing their learning potential. Students revealed that through interaction they could get a clear idea about the procedure to be followed and appropriate reading strategies to be applied to comprehend the text and extract different types of information.
**Interview Protocol**

RQ1. To answer the first question: Does dynamic assessment enhance language learning?, the researchers conducted a (T) test for the average of one community. The following table shows the result of the procedure.

Table 3. *One-sample statistics and one-sample test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48.6364</td>
<td>4.46741</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5.399</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three reveals the result of the (T) test for the average of one community to judge whether dynamic assessment boosts language learning or not.

It is clear from Table three that the calculated value of (T) was (5.399) at the level of statistical significance (0.000), this indicates a high level of dynamic assessment elevates language learning. This result testifies the first study question and supports Hidri (2019), Samran and Mehdi (2018), Naeini and Duvall (2012); Adeline (2012). Fifty-four percent of respondents advocated teachers discussing with students learning improvement, and 52.3% agreed with teachers discussing with students doing complex tasks. However, 43.2% disfavored avoiding giving students more challenging tasks to be done independently. The researchers observed the learner moved well between tasks within the zone of proximal development and maintained the potentials to perform complex tasks without assistance.

RQ2. To answer the second question: In what sense does identify learning gaps raise learners' learning awareness?, the researchers conducted a (T) test for the average of one community, and the following table shows the result of the procedure.

Table 4. *One-sample statistics and one-sample test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>28.2045</td>
<td>2.99286</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.968</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four shows that the calculated value of (T) was (-15.968-) at the level of statistical significance (0.000), indicating an increase in the level of developing learners' awareness through identifying learning gaps. The result testifies to the second study question. Moreover, (50%) respondents agreed, and (45.5%) strongly agreed that learners should identify the problems they face in learning a particular task or a learning material. Forty-eight percent ascertained the importance of asking questions to probe student’s knowledge. 61.4% agreed that the questions must be sequential, starting from what the students know. The results are in line with Naeini and Duvall (2012).
RQ3. To answer the third question: How do teachers play an influential role in dynamic classroom assessment?

Table five reveals that the result of the (T) test for the average of one community to judge 'How do teachers play an influential role in dynamic classroom assessment.'

**Table 5. One-sample statistics and one-sample Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28.3864</td>
<td>2.48919</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.689</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table five demonstrates that the calculated value of (T) was (11.689-) at the level of statistical significance (000.), this indicates a high level of teacher role in dynamic assessment. The result testifies the third study question, for the teacher mediates as interventionist and interactionist to improve learning by providing sequential prompts. Rashidi and Najed (2018), Adeline (2012), Dimitrios and Athanasia (2019), recommend this tendency. As per the results, 59.1% of respondents agreed with devoting instructional time during classes to fill learning gaps, and 56.8% of respondents preferred giving all the instructions at a time for a specific task. However, the researchers favor ordering instructions to promote learning. 75% of respondents disagreed with avoiding providing individual support to low achievers. Nevertheless, some added, "it depends on the abilities of individual students". 61.4% of respondents were against discouraging advanced students from helping less advanced peers as the interaction between the low and advanced learners is beneficial.

**Discussion**

The present study examines the significance of Dynamic Assessment in raising learners' learning, and the role of the instructors in enhancing the learning and tapping the potential of the learners to face the challenges of the 21st century. The results are in line with the observations of Adeline (2012) that Dynamic Assessment helps in assessing the present abilities and identifying the potential abilities of the learners. The instructor should acknowledge the fact that each learner possesses a special skill set and should look out for different means to identify the skills and hone them further. This, to a great extent, will instill confidence among the learners and eventually lead to their potential development. Further, the results and the findings are in line with the Feuerstein theory (1978), which states that abilities are not fixed. Skills development is an ongoing process and can develop through mediation and interactions among peers. The more the learners get exposure to experiences the stronger are the chances of developing their skills.

The research findings point towards Brown's notion of intervention and prompting by teachers, Nadine and Duvall (2012). The results of the questionnaire distributed to the faculty revealed that most of them prefer to intervene and give clues as guidance to channelize the thoughts of the learners and prevent digressions, disinterestedness, and demotivation, especially in the EFL context. This does not mean that the instructors make the learners too dependent or indulge in passive learning as considered by a good number of teachers with non-progressive mindsets who believe that learners should be seldom advised about what they need to do and left on their own. This kind of attitude can harm the learners. It draws a line between the
responsibilities of the instructors and the learners. It is to be realized by the instructors that they are a part of the learning process and cannot demarcate their roles and boundaries. The role of the instructors also leads to another factor stressed by Zoghi and Malmeer (2013). The results and the findings are in line with the fact that EFL learners, especially require intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at different stages of learning. Limited exposure and opportunities are the root cause for their lack of confidence and anxiety, eventually leading to dropouts and passive learning. Not hand holding but, constant expression of acknowledgment, concern, and guidance can have a remarkable influence on the performance and personality of the learners. The results agree with Dimitrios and Athanasia (2019) that learner's creative potential enhances through motivation. It gives the learners a push to exhibit their talent with an expectation to be appreciated and applauded, as is the human tendency. Rashidi and Najed (2018) and Hidri (2019) concluded that Dynamic Assessment had a positive impact, especially on the syntactic forms which are considered as a major challenge by the EFL learners due to remarkable differences in the syntactic pattern between Arabic and English. The learners at Prince Sattam University and Qassim University showed improvements in their writings. The instructors who were a part of the study witnessed the difference in the quality of writing with, and without guidance. Thus, the researchers conclude that Dynamic Assessment stimulates learning and is more humanistic in approach as stated in the referred studies.

Conclusion
The present study set out to investigate the effects of interactionist and interventionist models of Dynamic Assessment on 50 EFL students pursuing the First level of an undergraduate course at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The study concludes that Dynamic Assessment has a positive effect on language learning. Findings confirm the hypothesis of the study: proper mediation in identifying learning gaps and treatment via intervention and interaction gives classroom assessment potential to enhance student learning. In today’s competitive job market, primary importance is being given to skills and practical experience rather than mere academic grades. As part of the selection process, many organizations are conducting tests to identify the potential abilities of the candidates. Therefore, the instructors must shift from convergent to divergent ways of assessments thereby, not only testing current abilities but also tapping potential abilities and honing the skills. Instructors need to be very much a part of the learning process of the learners of which assessment is an essential component. The instructors have to be extra involved, especially with EFL learners, as traditional ways of assessing target language do not provide a fair chance to the learners to display their skills. Anxiety, lack of confidence, confusion cannot be overlooked as these internal factors can act as a hindrance. Positive and constructive feedback to a great extent could boost learning. Hence, negative feedback should be avoided as it could prove to be detrimental to the learning process. Through constant guidance and support could be harmful yet, direction at the right time and in a proper way could enhance the learners’ productivity by boosting their morale. However, the instructors should at the same time provide ample opportunities to the learners to develop their metacognition strategies. Thus, EFL instructors in specific and all instructors, in general, will have to identify interesting ways of assessing learners to enable them to display their talent, skills, and challenges.

Implications of the Research
Dynamic Assessment both as a concept and as a practice remains in need of substantial development, especially in EFL contexts. Further development is imperative in terms of process development.
assessment. The need of the hour is to promote intensive study and development of research related to learners’ approach towards learning tasks and inferential methods based on deliberate attempts to produce change. Another area for consideration is bridging the gap between learning assessment and classroom instruction and minimizing the problems of reliability and validity.

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Attitudes of Non-native Speakers of English Studying in Australia towards World Englishes

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Abstract
The present study explores attitudes of non-native speakers of English studying in a reputable university in Melbourne, Australia, towards world Englishes. In particular, the study investigates different attitudes between students enrolled in a university subject, which indirectly promotes the students’ acceptance towards them and those who have not taken the subject towards world Englishes. The present study uses the direct approach, which allows informants to give an account of their attitudes (McKenzie, 2010). By adopting a questionnaire designed by Yoshikawa (2005), the present study seeks to answer two research questions: (1) Do non-native English students taking the subject have different attitudes from non-native English students who have not taken the subject towards world Englishes? (2) Do the students enrolled in Linguistic-Related majors have different attitudes from the students enrolled in Non-Linguistic-Related majors towards world Englishes? The findings of the study will contribute to the literature on world Englishes and the identification of a possible way to promote the acceptance of world Englishes. The results show that informants who are taking/have taken the subject tend to have more positive attitudes towards non-Inner Circle varieties than those who have not taken the subject. Similar results are also shown among informants grouped based on their majors in which Linguistics-Related ones are more acceptant. However, there is no significant difference regarding their attitudes toward Inner Circle English.

Keywords: Australia, language attitude, language variations, native speakers, non-native speakers of English, world Englishes

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Several researchers (e.g., Crystal, 2003; Yano, 2009) mentioned English as the most taught foreign language in the world. This means that English is used by many non-native speakers of English (NNSEs). Hence, NNSEs who use English for communication arguably outnumber the native speakers of English (NSEs). However, English language varieties taught to EFL students are still limited to those of Inner Circle, i.e. Standard American English and Standard British English (Dewi, 2014; Lippi-Green, 2012).

Many English language courses rely heavily on Inner Circle English. This may cause NNSE students to be unaware of and unfamiliar with other varieties of English such as Singaporean English, Indian English, and many others (da Rosa, 2017). Furthermore, this makes them think that Inner Circle English is the only legit way to speak English (Ferguson, 1992; Marlina, 2013). However, some programs in higher education, especially of linguistics-related majors, offer a subject that allows the students to be more aware of different varieties of English around the world. The subject usually opens a discussion that focuses on the issues of world Englishes. This subject is also offered in an Australian university.

Australia is among the top destinations for international students to earn their degrees. According to Australia’s Department of Education and Training (2018), international students made up 27% of students in the country. With a considerable number of international students, maintaining respect for diversity is necessary. In a reputable university in Melbourne, Australia, there is a subject that explores the relationship between sociolinguistics and second language learning (hereafter referred to as SSLL). The subject is available for students enrolled in linguistic-related Master’s programs, including Applied Linguistics, TESOL, and Education. Although not stated explicitly in the subject guidelines, the subject indirectly raises students’ awareness of different varieties of English and promotes acceptance towards them.

The present study would like to see to what extent the subject contributes to promoting acceptance towards diverse English variations. Increasing the acceptance towards world Englishes is necessary to elevate the confidence of non-native variety of English users and to discourage any discriminatory actions against them (Almegren, 2018; McKenzie, 2010). It is expected that the present study can add to the literature of world Englishes and provide insights of a way of increasing people’s acceptance to world Englishes. Thus, the present study attempts to identify the different attitudes towards world Englishes among NNSE students who are taking the subject and those who have not taken the subject. It is also important to note that the discussion about world Englishes in the university for students of Linguistic-Related (LR) majors may not be restricted only in SSLL class. Other subjects in LR majors also address world Englishes although not as intensive as in SSLL class. Thus, the present study also attempts to investigate whether exposure to such issues in LR majors is a contributing factor in the students’ attitudes towards world Englishes. In order to do that, the present study investigates the different attitudes towards world Englishes among students in LR majors and students in Non-Linguistic-Related (NLR) majors. In brief, some research questions the present study attempt to investigate are as follows:

1. Do NNSE students taking SSLL subject have different attitudes from NNSE students who have not taken SSLL subject towards world Englishes?
2. Do NNSE students enrolled in LR majors have different attitudes from NNSE students enrolled in NLR majors towards world Englishes?

Based on the research questions formulated above, the objectives of the present study are as follows.

1. To identify whether or not NNSE students taking SSLL subject have different attitudes from NNSE students who have not taken SSLL subject towards world Englishes
2. To identify whether or not students in LR majors have different attitudes from students in NLR majors towards world Englishes

Literature Review

World Englishes

The idea of World Englishes was introduced by Kachru (1985). The term itself uses a plural noun to acknowledge the diverse varieties of English developed outside the Inner Circle countries. The term “Inner Circle” was used as he categorized English varieties into three circles, i.e., Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles. Inner Circle constitutes countries where English is originated and is widely spoken as the native language by the community, such as the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Outer Circle refers to “postcolonial Anglophonic contexts, a numerically large and diverse community” (Bolton, 2009, p.292) where English holds status as an official language. Countries that are considered in Outer Circle include Singapore, India, and Nigeria. Expanding Circle represents countries where English is generally considered a foreign language, such as Japan, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, and Thailand. Although some scholars (e.g., Al-Mutairi, 2020; Bruthiaux, 2003; Mollin, 2006) have criticized this model for promoting specific varieties and oversimplifying the diverse use of English in different regions, the classification itself demonstrates acknowledgment of the myriad varieties of English across the globe.

Language Attitudes towards World Englishes

The issues related to language attitudes towards world Englishes have gained more attention among linguists over the years. Negative attitudes towards non-native varieties of English have caused misunderstandings about the ownership of English (Ferguson, 1992). Although English is widely used as an international language, some NNSEs still believe that NSEs are the better users of the language and some English-related professions (e.g., English teacher) are better done by NSEs (Amin, 1997; Medgyes, 1992), not to mention that such issue was also found in languages other than English (e.g. Tsuchiya, 2020). Such fallacy has been challenged by some scholars (e.g., Medgyes & Kiss, 2019; Phillips, 2017; Phillipson, 1992; 1996) who argued that one’s language background is not the primary factor of one’s language teaching skills. Inner Circle Englishes is undoubtedly dominant in language courses (Tan, 2005; Ulum & Köksal, 2019). However, some scholars (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014) have suggested that introducing other varieties is necessary in the globalized era, in which people meet not only with NSEs. Some efforts have been done to increase the awareness and acceptance of world Englishes, one of which is by using authentic materials of world Englishes in ESL/EFL classes (Marlina, 2013; Matsuda, 2003; Passakornkarn & Vibulphol, 2020).

Some scholars (e.g., Almegren, 2018; Kim, 2007; Yoshikawa, 2005) have specifically studied the perception of NNSEs towards world Englishes. They investigated the perception of
Attitudes of Non-native Speakers of English Studying in Australia

NNSE students in Expanding Circle countries towards world Englishes. Yoshikawa (2005) and McKenzie (2010) examined the different attitudes of university students in Japan towards varieties of English using questionnaires. Yoshikawa (2005) divided the students from the Department of World Englishes at Chukyo University based on their length of study at the university. The results showed that the second- and third-year students are more acceptant towards a variety of English from their country, i.e., Japanese English. However, the longer their length of study was, the more they preferred Inner Circle English over Outer Circle as a model. His study also addressed the issues related to the ownership of the language and the legitimacy of NNSEs as English teachers. On the other hand, McKenzie (2010) also focused on the students’ awareness of different varieties of English by using verbal guise tests. The results showed that the students were unable to recognize non-standard varieties of English from Europe. Similar to Yoshikawa’s study, the students were more reliant to the Inner Circle varieties for the language model. He also found that the students tended to perceive Japanese-accented English to have “little intrinsic value or status and that assimilation to the prestige varieties (i.e., ‘native speaker Englishes’) is the most desirable outcome” (McKenzie, 2010, p. 147). This, in part, illustrates the inability to accept non-native varieties of English.

A study conducted by Kim (2007) in South Korea focused on language attitudes towards world Englishes among Korean adult learners. Similar to Yoshikawa and McKenzie’s studies, Kim found that the participants preferred American English as a model and regarded English as a means of communication to interact not only with NSEs but also NNSEs. Interestingly, though they showed positive attitudes to non-native varieties of English, they were not well aware of different varieties of English. In other words, the participants apparently “regarded English as an international language and do not discriminate native and non-native varieties/models of English” (Kim, 2007, p.42). Furthermore, some participants were interested in learning non-native varieties of English, especially those of Outer Circle. Most of the participants also showed positive attitudes towards local teachers teaching English, likely because of the shared culture and language.

A more recent study was undertaken by Almegren (2018) in Saudi Arabia. He investigated 50 Saudi students’ awareness and acceptance towards non-native varieties of English. The data collection was incorporated with interviews with some participants. The results showed that the participants were aware of different varieties of English. However, unlike Kim’s study, Almegren’s study brought up an issue of legitimate speakers of English. This has caused them to have a lack of confidence about their accents, meaning that they were not likely to accept the variety of English of their nation. As Almegren (2018, p. 244) pointed out, most participants “were not impressed by their accent irrespective of the fact that they were speaking correctly.” Based on the results, the participants preferred American English as the various model and English native speakers as their English language teachers.

Some studies demonstrated mixed results with regards to the NNSEs’ perceptions towards world Englishes. However, all of them showed that conducting a survey using Likert-scale questionnaires provides fruitful insights for language attitude research. It is important to highlight that none of these studies were undertaken in an Inner Circle country. Hence, the present study tries to fill the gap by undertaking the research among international NNSE students in Australia. As Australia has attracted many international students from different countries, it is
inevitable for these students to interact with people from different countries and be exposed to different varieties of English. Furthermore, the present study focused on SSLL as a contributing factor to the students’ acceptance of world Englishes.

Methods
The present study used the direct approach to investigate informants’ language attitudes. According to McKenzie (2010), the direct approach allows the informants to provide an account of their attitudes. The informants easily understand what they need to do in the study, making the data collection less time-consuming. In order to measure the informants’ language attitudes, the present study uses questionnaires that will elicit quantitative data. Quantitative data analysis allows the researcher to draw a general conclusion from a larger sample size (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970; Rahman, 2017). Another advantage of quantitative data analyses is that the data can be easily categorized according to the objective of the research (McKenzie, 2010; Almegren, 2018). The details of the study methods are as follows.

Informants
The present study uses convenience sampling. This type of sampling is chosen because it allows the researcher to recruit members of the target population with specific practical criteria, including easy accessibility, their availability, and willingness to participate (Dörnyei, 2007). Informants in this study consist of 29 students of Master’s programs at the reputable university in Melbourne, Australia in May 2017: 13 students were taking/had taken SSLL subject and 16 students did not. The distribution of the students in these categories is relatively equal. There are 17 students from linguistic-related majors (i.e., Applied Linguistics and TESOL) and 12 students from non-linguistic-related majors (i.e., Information Systems, Tax, Development Studies, Law, Public Health, Engineering Management, Urban Planning, and Public Policy). All participants are from Expanding Circle countries, including China, Indonesia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Pakistan, and Mongolia. Among these participants, 28% of them have visited English-speaking countries other than Inner Circle countries, meaning that they were likely to have exposure to non-Inner Circle varieties.

Instruments
The data in the present study were collected using questionnaires. Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) mention that open question questionnaires and closed question questionnaires are among the most widely used instruments to identify ones’ language attitudes. Questionnaires with open question items may elicit extensive data, including the ones that researchers may not have anticipated. While researchers can benefit from abundant data, they may need extra time to categorize the responses, rate them, and analyze them. In other words, scoring problems are the main issues in using open question questionnaire in studies on language attitudes. Such disadvantages have caused some researchers to avoid the use of open question questionnaires for an initial survey. Hence, closed question questionnaires are usually preferred in this circumstance. This type of questionnaire is more straightforward by providing the informants with specific responses, usually a set of rating terms such as “yes/no” response or a 5-point scale.

The questionnaire used in the present study is a closed question questionnaire. It adopts the questionnaire designed by Yoshikawa (2005). It uses a 5-point Likert scale, with the value of one point for “strongly disagree” and five for “strongly agree.” In other words, the higher the
value is, the more the participants agree with the statements. Provided that the participants are currently studying at an English-medium university, they are assumed to understand English. Therefore, the questionnaires were written in English. The statements used in the questionnaires were slightly modified from the original version (cf. Yoshikawa, 2005) to adjust with the various backgrounds of the informants and make the statements just.

Statement one seems to be general (see Appendix A). However, it is put in the questionnaires to identify the informants’ attitudes towards English as an international language. On the other hand, statements two, three, four, five, six, and seven are used to identify the informants’ attitudes towards world Englishes. These statements address not only the language variations, but also the language users (e.g., statements two, three, and seven). A higher value for statements three, five, and six suggest acceptance of the world Englishes. Conversely, a higher value for statements two and four indicates reliance on Inner Circle varieties of English.

In addition to describing the informants’ language attitudes, the questionnaire collects participants’ background information. The information collected through the questionnaires includes country of origin, study program, whether the informants are taking or have taken SSLL subject, whether or not the informants have visited English-speaking countries other than Inner Circle countries.

**Procedures**

Data collection was conducted in May 2017. The questionnaires were distributed in several occasions. The questionnaires were distributed before the week-10 class of SSLL started. This was intended to gather the data from target informants, i.e., those who are taking or have taken SSLL subject. The decision to collect the data in week-10 class was because 75% of the subject materials in the semester was already taught by week 10, and the students were assumed to have a sufficient understanding of world Englishes. The questionnaires were also distributed to collect data from LR students who have not taken SSLL. In order to get data from students of NLR majors, data collection was done among members of a postgraduate student club at the university.

Following the data collection, the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were then computed in SPSS Version 24. Similar to that in some studies (Almegren, 2018; Kim, 2007; McKenzie, 2010; Yoshikawa, 2005), the data based on the scale were treated as interval data. In order to answer the research questions, the data were analysed using the independent t-test. Furthermore, the effect size was computed using effect size calculator on http://www.uccs.edu/~lbecker/.

**Results**

**Language Attitudes Based on Enrolment in SSLL Subject**

Based on descriptive statistics as presented in Table one, the group of informants who are taking or have taken SSLL subject has a higher mean value for statements three, five, and six than the group of informants who has not taken the subject do. On the other hand, the informants who have not taken SSLL subject consistently have higher mean value for statements indicating reliance on Inner Circle Englishes, i.e., statements two and four. Furthermore, the mean values are above three, indicating their positive attitudes. Interestingly, the higher mean value for
statement seven is obtained by informants who have not taken SSLL subject. Despite the difference on descriptive statistics, the results of t-test show that the significant difference resides on statements two \((t = 2.84, p < 0.01, d = 1.07)\) and five \((t = 3.65, p < 0.005, d = 1.37)\) only. Furthermore, the results of Cohen’s \(d\) calculation indicate that effect sizes for the two statements are relatively large. It means that there is a big difference between the two groups towards both statements.

Table 1. *Comparison of language attitudes based on enrolment in SSLL subject*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSLL enrolment</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>(t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Importance of learning English</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching by NSE</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teaching by NNSE</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Varieties of Inner Circle</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Varieties of Outer Circle</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Varieties of home country (Expanding Circle)</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Avoiding idiomatic expressions</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *\(p<0.01, **p<0.005, SD = Standard Deviation\)

**Language Attitudes based on Majors**

Table two indicates that the group of informants from LR majors have a higher mean value than the group of informants from the NLR majors for statements three, five, and six. It should be noted that except for statement six, the LR group’s mean values for statements three and five are lower than three, despite being higher than those of the NLR group. On the other hand, the students from the NLR majors have a higher mean value for statements one, two, four, and seven. In addition, the mean values of the NLR group in these four statements are higher than three, suggesting positive attitudes.

In accordance with t-test results, both groups only have significant differences in three statements, i.e. statements two \((t = 3.71, p<0.005, d = 1.38)\), five \((t = 4.19, p<0.001, d = 1.65)\), and seven \((t = 2.53, p<0.05, d = .96)\). As indicated by the value of Cohen’s \(d\), the two groups have big differences in their attitudes on the three statements.

Table 2. *Comparison of language attitudes based on majors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Majors</th>
<th>Linguistics</th>
<th>Non-linguistics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>(t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Importance of learning English</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching by NSE</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teaching by NNSE</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Varieties of Inner Circle</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Varieties of Outer Circle</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Varieties of home country (Expanding Circle)</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Avoiding idiomatic expressions</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *\(p<0.01, **p<0.005\)
Discussion

According to the statistical analysis, the informants who are taking or have taken SSLL subject have different attitudes from those who have not taken SSLL towards world Englishes. They have notably different attitudes towards the English teaching by NSEs and varieties of Outer Circle as model languages. It is evident in the data that the informants who have not taken SSLL show a more positive attitude towards NSEs as legitimate English teachers. This attitude may be due to the belief that NSEs have more legitimate ownership of English than NNSEs do (Ferguson, 1992). However, this might also be affected by the qualifications of NSE teachers who were better equipped with a lot of training (Almegren, 2018). The phenomena of native speaker fallacy have also been recorded by some scholars (e.g., Amin, 1997; Medgyes, 1992; Tsuchiya, 2020). On the other hand, SSLL students’ attitude towards NSEs as the legitimate English teachers tends to be negative. It is probably due to the learning materials they have learned in the subject (e.g. Rampton, 1990; Widdowson, 1994) that question English ownership. This may lead them to be more critical towards NSEs.

On the other hand, the SSLL students have a higher positive attitude towards Outer Circle English as a model language than non-SSLL students do. The SSLL students are likely to be aware of different varieties of English, and their positive attitude has, in part, shown their acceptance of English varieties other than Inner Circle ones. Unlike Kim’s finding (2007) where the learners accepted Outer Circle as a language model because they wanted to visit the country, the SSLL students’ awareness is likely affected by the knowledge they got from the subject. This finding is also slightly different from some studies (e.g., Marlina, 2013; Matsuda, 2003; Passakornkarn & Vibulphol, 2020) which showed the development of ones’ awareness through the exposure of authentic materials of world Englishes. It should be noted that the SSLL students may not fully accept Outer Circle varieties as model languages provided the mean value below three. Instead, both SSLL students and those who have not taken the subject equally agree that Inner Circle varieties are suitable as a model language in English learning. This is indicated by the mean value higher than 3. Such finding has also been documented by other scholars (Almegren, 2018; Kim, 2007; McKenzie, 2010; Yoshikawa, 2005) in which the participants mostly favored Standard American English as a preferred language model. This preference could be related to the fact that Inner Circle varieties are dominant in education setting and become the standard (Tan, 2005; Ulum & Köksal, 2019), although some scholars (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014) have proven that in real-life communication NNSE users do not necessarily follow Inner Circle English’s norms.

When the informants were grouped based on the relatedness of their majors with linguistics, different attitudes towards world Englishes were apparent. The informants from LR majors and NLR majors have different attitudes towards NSE speakers as legitimate English teachers, Outer Circle English as a model language, and avoidance of idiomatic expressions. Similar to the results from SSLL students, the informants from LR majors have a more negative attitude towards NSEs as the legitimate English teachers and a more positive attitude towards Outer Circle English as a model language. It should be noted that some LR informants have not taken SSLL subject. This similar trend of attitudes with that of SSLL informants may be due to the exposure to knowledge of world Englishes they receive in other subjects. Though some
subjects in LR programs do not necessarily focus on world Englishes, they address some issues on world Englishes. The LR students’ career aspirations may contribute to the lower mean score towards NSEs as the legitimate English teachers. Some linguistics or TESOL students may aspire to be English teachers. Thus, they may consider themselves as legit English teachers. As some scholars have argued (e.g., Medgyes & Kiss, 2019; Phillips, 2017; Phillipson, 1992; 1996), the ability to teach English should not be affected by the fact that one is a native speaker of the language; rather, one’s pedagogical skills.

On the other hand, the informants from NLR majors tend to agree to avoid idiomatic expressions. While Yoshikawa (2005) argues that the avoidance of idiomatic expressions shows the tendency to recognize world Englishes, the finding in the present study should be interpreted differently. The attitude towards avoidance of idiomatic expressions is more related to NNSEs’ English language proficiency. Because the data were taken in Australia, an Inner Circle country, a higher positive attitude towards avoidance of idiomatic expressions indicates that the informants tend to sympathize with, or underestimate, NNSEs’ English competence. They may be worried if the NNSEs do not understand the idiomatic expressions they use, which might lead to miscommunication.

Another thing that comes up in the results of the study is the fact that most informants accept the English variety from their home countries. This finding is different from that in Almegren’s (2018) and McKenzie’s (2010) studies in which the participants tended to belittle the varieties of their home countries. The loyalty towards home-country varieties is shown by the majority of the informants regardless of their enrolment in SSLL and LR majors. Such attitudes maybe because they are exposed to different varieties every day when they interact with fellow international students. As long as the communication is easily transmitted among the speakers, it should not be a problem for them to accept any English varieties.

Conclusion
The present study seeks to answer different attitudes towards world Englishes among students taking SSLL subject and those who have not taken the subject. The results have shown that there are different attitudes towards world Englishes between NNSE students who have taken SSLL subject and those who have not. Unlike studies conducted by Yoshikawa (2005), the present study does not find any significant difference in attitudes towards Inner Circle English among SSLL students and non-SSLL students. The results show that the involvement in SSLL subject is not the only factor that may cause different attitudes towards world Englishes.

Furthermore, the present study also attempts to identify different attitudes towards world Englishes among NNSE students from LR majors and those from NLR majors. The results have demonstrated that the different attitudes are apparent between these categorizations. The majors which expose them to the knowledge of world Englishes (i.e., LR majors) contribute to the more positive attitudes towards world Englishes. NLR students showed more negative attitudes towards world Englishes in some aspects. Further research may need to use a larger sample size. Furthermore, interviews can be incorporated with the questionnaires to gain more profound insights into the informants’ attitudes (Almegren, 2018). It is also possible to consider assessing different students’ attitudes before and after taking similar subjects towards world Englishes.
More modification of the statements in the questionnaire is necessary, for example in statement seven, in order to avoid different readings, which can result in deviance from expectation.

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References


**Appendices**

**Appendix**

**Questionnaire: Attitudes towards World Englishes**

a. My home country: .................................................................

b. Study program (e.g. Master of Applied Linguistics): ........................

c. Are you taking/ Have you taken subject “Sociolinguistics and Language Learning”?
   - Yes
   - No

d. Have you ever been to English-speaking countries (except Australia, UK, USA, Canada, and New Zealand) for studying or travelling?  Yes  No
   - a. Studying: Name of country / length of stay (…………./…………...)  
   - b. Traveling: Name of country / length of stay (……………………/………………)

Circle the answer that reflects your opinion about the statements below.

Example:

I enjoy studying at this university.

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

1. English is the most popular language among language learners in your home country. This is natural in the present world situation.

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

2. English has to be taught by native speakers.

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

3. English has to be taught by local teachers (non-native speakers).

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

4. Standard American English or Standard British English is the most suitable as a model language for learners in your home country.

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

5. Standard Singaporean English or Standard Indian English is suitable as a model language for learners in your home country.

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

6. English variety from your home country (e.g., Chinese English, Japanese English, Indonesian English, Vietnamese English) is acceptable if it is communicable.

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

7. You had better avoid using idiomatic expressions in conversations in English with non-native speakers of English.

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

The author agrees that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declares the absence of conflicting interests with any funders.
Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Thai High School Students in Science, Language, and English Programs

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Abstract
This study investigated the frequency of different techniques used by high school learners studying in various programs. The main objective of this study was to compare the use of vocabulary learning strategies between multiple programs of study and examine the relationship between these different strategies. A total of 491 high school students from multiple academic disciplines participated in this study. A 47-item questionnaire of vocabulary learning strategies was given to the participants. In addition, qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews with 21 students to gain further information on their vocabulary learning strategy use. The interview recordings were immediately transcribed verbatim and translated from Thai into English by two experts. The results indicated that the most frequently used strategies were determination strategies, whereas memory strategies were used the least. The findings also showed that the learning context influenced the participants’ use of vocabulary learning strategies. The qualitative results further revealed the variety of vocabulary learning strategies and the degrees of strategy use. In conclusion, this study highlighted that vocabulary learning strategies are interrelated, and the strategies adopted by learners can depend on vocabulary learning conditions.

Keywords: conditions of vocabulary learning, English program, language program, science program, Vocabulary learning strategies

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Introduction

Developing English language competence for students in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts has been a significant burden for English language teachers and researchers. In second language (L2) acquisition, vocabulary knowledge is an integral part of English language learning. According to Read (2000), vocabulary knowledge is essential for successful language learning as it assists language learners to comprehend the meaning of larger structures better. In other words, when language learners know many words in a target language, they are more comfortable using that language in both receptive and productive manners. Thus, it is suggested that effective vocabulary learning strategies need to promote vocabulary learning to improve students’ language competence.

Schmitt (1997) defined vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) as tactics or actions that can help language learners acquire and retain vocabulary knowledge. Research on L2 vocabulary indicates that VLS plays a pivotal role in language learning (Nation, 2001). Specifically, VLS facilitates vocabulary knowledge and English language attainment. Students may use different strategies to acquire vocabulary knowledge if they feel those strategies are practical, functional, and suitable. Moreover, when learners are equipped with various methods, they can adapt the strategy according to the learning context.

Several long-term studies have been conducted to examine VLS in EFL contexts at a tertiary level (Fan, 2003; Kongthong, 2007; Siriwan, 2007; Bernardo & Gonzales, 2009; Mustapha & Asgari, 2010; Zhang, 2011; Heng, 2011; Pookcharoen, 2011; Komol & Sripetpun, 2011; Han, 2014; Nirattisai & Chiramanee, 2014; Boonkongsaen & Intarapraser, 2014; Saengpakdeejit, 2014; Rojanananak & Vitayapirak, 2015; Phonhan, 2016; Nie & Zhou, 2017; Panduangkaew, 2018; Boonnoon, 2019). Other studies have assessed the frequency of VLS use and the relationship between VLS and other aspects such as academic field of study, learners’ English proficiency, and gender. Although previous studies have addressed the use of VLS in EFL contexts, there has been no investigation on how different academic learning programs might influence students’ use of vocabulary learning strategies at a secondary level.

Literature review

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Many scholars have examined the development and the term of vocabulary learning strategies, and they have classified different taxonomies of VLS. Oxford (1990) presents a comprehensive taxonomy of VLS by dividing it into two main categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Gu and Johnson (1996) investigated the use of vocabulary learning strategies employed by Chinese learners and classified vocabulary learning strategies into eight categories as; belief about vocabulary learning, metacognitive regulation, guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, note-taking strategies, memory (using rehearsal) strategies, memory (using encoding) strategies, and activation strategies. Furthermore, Lawson and Hogben (1996) divided VLSs into four broad categories. The individual VLSs were classified under four categories: repetition, word feature analysis, simple elaboration, and complex elaboration.

Schmitt (1997) developed and classified vocabulary learning strategies, adapted from Oxford’s, into five subcategories under two main categories; Determination, Social, Memory, Cognitive, and Metacognitive strategies. Determination strategies occur when learners encounter
discovering the meaning of a new word without resorting to any help from another person’s experience. Social strategies pertain to learning a new word by interaction with others. Memory strategies emerge when learners link their learning of a new word by associating their previous knowledge with a new word. Cognitive strategies are relevant to the repetition and employing mechanical means for vocabulary learning. Lastly, metacognition strategies entail a consciousness used in the learning process and help students use the best study methods.

Nation (2001) classified his taxonomy by distinguishing between the sources of vocabulary knowledge and learning processes. Thus, three classes of vocabulary learning strategies: planning, sources, and processes.

Method

This study examined the frequency with which Thai high school students used VLS when learning new words and retrieving the meaning of learned words. It also examined the differences in strategies used across study programs and the relationships between strategy. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Participants and Settings

The participants were 491 EFL students, ranging from 15 to 18 years of age, in three study programs from two public high schools in northeastern Thailand. The participants included 180 Science program students, 184 Language program students, and 127 English program students. The Science program included subjects in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics, whereas the Language program included the compulsory subjects and foreign languages such as Chinese, Japanese, French. Finally, English program students studied English, Mathematics, Science, Social studies, Home Economics, Physical Education, Computer, and Arts in the English language with native speakers. They also studied the Thai language and some social studies in their native Thai language.

All participants in this study had studied English as a foreign language since primary school and, as such, they had at least nine-year experience in learning English. It was assumed that all participants had a similar background in English language learning regarding their learning experiences within a school context. Moreover, throughout the nine years’ experience in learning the English language, the participants in this study were in compulsory education, which provided similar subjects and content.

In a section of the questionnaire, the participants were asked if they were available to provide further information in a personal interview a week after completing the questionnaire and, if so, to provide their telephone number. Galvin (2015) suggests that seven to eight interviews suffice for descriptive studies. Accordingly, 21 participants (7 from each study program) completed the interview process.

Instruments

Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire

The 47-item questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Schmitt’s (1997) taxonomy of VLS, and the items were classified under five categories: determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the participant’s
personal information and the participants’ VLS use, which was assessed using a 6-point Likert’s scale from 0 (never), 1 (rarely), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often), 4 (usually), to 5 (always). The questionnaire was translated into Thai by two certified English-Thai translators to ensure that all the participants understood the items.

Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews allow individuals to show their independent thinking without confronting peers in a focus group and provide an opportunity to explore the participants’ responses. In the current study, the beginning of the interview entailed general questions to establish a positive relationship between the interviewer and the interviewees. The interview questions focused on the strategies that the students employed to know the meaning of unknown words and when they want to retain the meaning of the newly learned words. The students’ rationale for using these strategies was also probed. Regarding the reliability and validity of the interview questions, the question items were translated into Thai by two certificated English-Thai translators and assessed by five experts in English Language Teaching.

Procedures

Before the main study, a questionnaire was piloted with a cohort of participants who had similar characteristics. None of these participants was involved in the main study. In the main study, the data were collected using a questionnaire on VLS. The participants took approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire, including the time required to explain the questionnaire’s items. Then, 21 students were randomly selected to participate in a semi-structured interview, which occurred one week after completing the questionnaire. These interviews were conducted in Thai and lasted approximately 45 minutes for each student. The interviews were recorded and immediately transcribed verbatim for the data analysis.

The completed questionnaires were tallied and tabulated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to identify the students’ VLS use. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviation (S.D.) for each item, were calculated to determine the participants’ use of VLS. A one-way ANOVA and Fisher’s least-significant difference test (LSD) were used to determine any differences in VLS use between the three study programs. Correlations were also calculated to show the relationship between strategic vocabulary learning between these groups.

Results

Thai High School Learners’ VLS Use

Table 1 summarises the results of the questionnaire for the overall VLS use in Thai high school participants. The results showed that the most frequently used strategy by Thai high school participants was determination strategies (DET, 54.66%, SD = 0.698), followed by metacognitive strategies (MET, 52.83%, SD = 0.893), social strategies (SOC, 49.50%, SD = 0.877) and cognitive strategies (COG, 49.50%, SD = 0.860) and, finally, memory strategies (MEM, 47.83 %, SD = 0.760). The current findings suggest that Thai high school participants exploit all VLS.
Table 1. Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) used by high school learners (n = 491)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Mean (M)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determination strategy (DET)</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>54.66</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive strategy (MET)</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>52.83</td>
<td>.893</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social strategy (SOC)</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>49.50</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive strategy (COG)</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>49.50</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory strategy (MEM)</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To gain further insight into high school students’ VLS use, the student’s responses in the interviews were transcribed verbatim and then translated from Thai into English for data analysis. The table below shows a sample of the interview excerpts from students in each study program for the five types of strategies.

Table 2. The students’ interview excerpt about Determination strategies (DET) use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study programs</th>
<th>VLSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>• I mostly use a bilingual dictionary and an online dictionary to know the meaning because it is convenient. (S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I use an online dictionary on my cell phone (Longdo) because it provides L1 translation and synonyms, which are very useful. I also make use of a word’s contexts and sentence structures to help me guess the meaning of a word. (S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>• I guess from the context and its image. They help me guess the meaning of the word. (L1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I use an online dictionary on my phone. (L2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>• I use Google translation and an online dictionary on my cell phone because it is effortless and fast. (E1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I use an online dictionary, and I often guess the word’s meaning by guessing its context. I see it is constructive. (E2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. The students’ interview excerpt about Social strategies (SOC) use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study programs</th>
<th>VLSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>• I ask my teacher for the meaning and synonyms of the words, and I ask my friends sometimes. (S3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I prefer asking my friends to my teacher because my teacher does not seem to understand me. (S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>• I like to ask my friends and my English teacher for the definition and further examples because I feel they are creditable to me. (L3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I learn new words by asking friends and teachers in the classroom because I cannot concentrate on the lessons alone. So, I better learn by asking other people. I also talk with my foreign friends. Whenever I see unknown words, I note them on my cell phone and have foreigners explain their meaning. I feel much comfortable having friends define to me, and this strategy always works for me. (L4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>• When I struggle with any unknown words, especially in a science class, I ask my English teacher for a word’s meaning, hints, and synonyms. They help me better understand the word and the content. (E3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I ask my teacher for a meaning of a word. (E4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. The students’ interview excerpt about Memory strategies (MEM) use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study programs</th>
<th>VLSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Science        | • I try to use sounds and images to help me remember. For example, the word “Ant” – I try to imagine an ant whose head looks like the shape of the alphabet A- in the word “ant”. It is pretty complicated but beneficial to me. I also study its pronunciation. I remember vocabulary by mapping, grouping. I always do mapping and grouping because it helps me recognize and connect to other related words. (S5)  
• I say the word aloud and think about the image of a word to remember the meaning. I group words in the same categories. I also use the words in sentences. (S6)  |
| Language       | • I draw pictures to help me remember. In my opinion, these strategies suit me well, and they are beneficial to me. (L5)  
• I sort the vocabulary by its categories. When I get used to these strategies, they help me a lot, and I can remember the vocabulary well from them, and I can use the vocabulary better in my speaking. (L6)  |
| English        | • I make up a story and think about real situations containing words to help me recall the meaning. (E5)  
• I remember from images, letters, positions of the word on a page, alphabetical order. (E6)  |

Table 5. The students’ interview excerpt about Cognitive strategies (COG) use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study programs</th>
<th>VLSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Science        | • I often study and revise the learned vocabulary from the student’s book. Also, I use a highlighter pen because I think colors work well with my brain, helping me recognize vocabulary well. It is beneficial to me. (S7)  
• I also have a mini-book for jotting down the unknown words. I usually repeat the vocabulary to help me remember when I have a vocabulary quiz. I also use a highlighter pen to highlight and revise them to help me remember. (S8)  |
| Language       | • I use post-it papers when studying wordlist, I have found that I can revise better. I also say the vocabulary out many times to remember. I like to use a highlighter pen when studying words. (L7)  
• I just jot down the vocabulary and revise it to help me remember. (L8)  |
| English        | • I study Ultimate Vocab for Academics. I have a notebook to jot down; it helps. (E7)  |

Table 6. The students’ interview excerpt about Metacognitive strategies (MET) use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study programs</th>
<th>VLSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Science        | • I revise vocabulary once a week. I watch soundtrack movies, online VDOs, and listen to music. When I see unknown words, I jot down and find the meaning later. I also do extensive reading with Harry Potter to improve my English. (S9)  
• I often watch soundtrack movies and read online novels. I learn vocabulary with these strategies because they are relaxing, and I am keen on them. I also say the word and try to use vocabulary that I learned to practice English. These strategies are helpful to me. (S10)  |
| Language       | • I watch cartoons, English series, and English movies on Netflix to help me learn and improve my English vocabulary. I watch these because I like
Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Thai High School Students

Thiendathong & Sukying

Study programs

- I always read books to revise the lessons by myself. I also learn new vocabulary from the Internet, YouTube, VDO, online news about celebrities. I am interested in this entertainment. So, I can learn English vocabulary happily. (L10)

- I like to watch movies, listen to English songs, and read books. When I learn by myself, I better remember. I like to listen to it over time because it helps me with the accent. (E8)

- I am obsessed with reading online novels. I also watch English movies because it is easily accessible. (E9)

Comparing VLS use between study programs

Figure 1 summarizes the use of VLS among the three study programs (science, language, and English). It appears that students from all three study programs used various strategies to learn English vocabulary. The results indicate that students in the science and language programs had a similar pattern of VLS use; however, the English program students appeared to use VLS more than students in the other two study programs.

Table 7. Comparing Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) use between study program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLSs</th>
<th>Study Program</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>determination strategy (DET)</td>
<td>Science program</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>53.50</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.662</td>
<td>.005*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language program</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>53.66</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.710</td>
<td>5.369</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English program</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>57.50</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social strategy (SOC)</td>
<td>Science program</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.875</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language program</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>47.50</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td>16.836</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English program</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>55.66</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.781</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memory strategy (MEM)</td>
<td>Science program</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>46.83</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language program</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>46.16</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td>8.587</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English program</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>51.83</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cognitive strategy (COG)</td>
<td>Science program</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>49.16</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.897</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language program</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>48.33</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td>2.498</td>
<td>.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English program</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>51.83</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.815</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metacognitive strategy (MET)</td>
<td>Science program</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>50.66</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>.869</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language program</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>51.66</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.930</td>
<td>9.544</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English program</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>57.66</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.807</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Overall, English students used the metacognitive strategy more than the other strategies (57.66 %, \( \bar{x} = 3.46, \) SD = 0.807), whereas language and science program students showed a preference for determination strategies over other strategies 53.66 %, \( \bar{x} = 3.22, \) SD = 0.71 and 53.5 %, \( \bar{x} = 3.21, \) SD = 0.662, respectively). The results also show no distinct difference in cognitive strategy use among the students in this study.
Moreover, the results indicate that English program students were more likely than science and language students to use determination strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. Indeed, a one-way ANOVA confirmed that VLS use differed significantly between study programs. Specifically, Post-hoc tests showed that the English-program students employed significantly more determination strategies (DET), social strategies (SOC), memory strategies (MEM), and metacognitive strategies (MET) than those from science-program and language-program.

Figure 1. Comparison of VLS use between study programs

Relationship between Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Table 2 shows the results of the correlational analysis. It was found that the strategies were positively correlated, with a medium to a high degree of correlation among all five categories. Specifically, there was a strong correlation between the DET and the MEM (r = 0.562), the DET and the MET (r = 0.507), the SOC and the MEM (r = 0.603), the SOC and the COG (r = 0.513), the MEM and the COG (r = 0.665), the MEM and the MET (r = 0.577), and the COG and the MET (r = 0.585). The relationship between the DET and the SOC (r = 0.397), the DET and the COG (r = 0.474), and the SOC and the MET (r = 0.425) were considered medium-strength relationships.

Overall, the correlational analysis revealed significant relationships between different VLS. The correlation between memory strategies (MEM) and cognitive strategies was the highest (r = 0.665), suggesting that these strategies are often used in conjunction. By contrast, the correlation between the determination strategies (DET) and the social strategies (SOC) was the lowest (r = 0.397), indicating that students are less likely to employ both of these strategies.

Table 8. Correlations between vocabulary learning strategies (Pearson correlations, r)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLSs</th>
<th>Correlations (r)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(DET)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determination strategy (DET)</td>
<td>.397**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social strategy (SOC)</td>
<td>.603**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memory strategy (MEM)</td>
<td>.665**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cognitive strategy (COG)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metacognitive strategy (MET)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **. The correlation difference is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
Discussion
Thai High School Learners’ VLSs Use

This study explored Thai high school participants’ vocabulary learning strategy use. Overall, the results indicate that Thai high school participants used determination strategies the most, followed by metacognitive strategies, social and cognitive strategies, and, finally, memory strategies.

Determination strategies were found to be the most frequently used by the participants in this study. It appears that these strategies are beneficial in assisting L2 learners when they face difficulties in understanding the meaning of unknown words. For example, using a dictionary, which falls in the determination category, is highly convenient, explaining its frequent use among students. In this study, the participants reported that they preferred bilingual dictionaries as they offer the learners’ native language. These current findings are consistent with previous studies showing that learners can decode the meaning of new words by making use of textual contexts, using a bilingual dictionary, and analyzing any available pictures or gestures (Fan, 2003; Kongthong, 2007; Pookchareon, 2011; Komol & Sripetpun, 2011; Nirattisai & Chiramanee, 2014; Rojananak & Vitayapirak, 2015; Panduangkaew, 2018). The use of determination strategies, including using dictionaries, the context, word structures, and available references, was also reported in the semi-structured interviews, as shown in the following excerpts:

“I use an online dictionary on my cell phone (Longdo) because it provides L1 translation and synonyms, which are very useful. I also make use of a word’s contexts and sentence structures to help me guess the meaning of a word.” (S2)

“I guess from the context and its image. They help me guess the meaning of the word.” (L1)

“I use Google translation and an online dictionary on my cell phone because it is effortless and fast.” (E1)

“I mostly use a bilingual dictionary and an online dictionary when I want to know the meaning because it is convenient. (S1)”

By contrast, memory strategies were employed the least for vocabulary retention in the high school participants. This finding is consistent with a previous study that reported a low application of memory strategies (Fan, 2003). Memory strategies can be complicated to employ, which may explain their low frequency of use. Such strategies require complex mental processing, such as imagery, word association, and keyword methods (Schmitt, 2000). Indeed, memory strategies required that learners connect the newly learned word with their pre-existing knowledge or experience, which requires a high level of mental processing. Another reason for the low adoption of this strategy could be the substantial vocabulary that learners need to acquire. When there is an excessive load of word for EFL learners to remember, learners may avoid memory strategies, such as repetition. These results suggest that strategies that require time to create, learn, and practice, are not practical or straightforward to use for all learners.

However, other studies have reported that memory strategies are the most frequently used strategy, particularly in EFL settings (U-pitak, 2011; Heng, 2011). It may be due to the traditional English-language instruction commonly used in some EFL contexts, which mostly leads learners to perform rote learning. Moreover, in the qualitative findings, a few participants
expressed the usefulness of the Keyword Method (a memory strategy) but did acknowledge its complexity, for example:

“I try to use sounds and images to help me remember. For example, the word “Ant” – I try to imagine an ant whose head looks like the shape of the alphabet A- in the word “ant.” It is pretty complicated but beneficial to me.” (S5)

Comparing Strategies Used between Study Programs

The current findings showed that the English program participants outperformed the science and language program participants in all VLS. These findings are in line with previous research, which reported significant differences in the use of VLS across academic majors (Bernardo & Gonzales, 2009; Boonnoon, 2019). These findings might be explained by the disparity in the learning contexts of the three study programs. For instance, the English program might provide additional opportunities for students to use the English language due to the program’s instruction. Indeed, in this program, several subjects are mainly instructed in the English language. Moreover, with authentic textbooks, the students have to deal with the natural language that native speakers employ in authentic contexts. Such programs also offer native English-speaking teachers and foreign teachers from various nationalities and cultures, encouraging English-program students to engage in meaningful conversations when learning word meanings in the classroom. English-program students are EFL learners pursuing English to learn English. The English program students need to strive in their learning contexts since more exposure also means more chances to meet a wide range of vocabulary. As a result, they may resort to using more VLS than other programs. For instance, asking teachers for help could help learners obtain a more transparent comprehension of the word’s meaning in a natural context. The qualitative finding of the current study supports this claim:

“When I struggle with any unknown words, especially in a science class, I ask my English teacher for a word’s meaning, hints, and synonyms. They help me better understand the word and the content.” (E3)

The results from the questionnaire showed that the participants in the science and language programs had a similar pattern of VLS use. This finding is somewhat consistent with Phonhan (2016), who reported a non-significant difference in the use of VLS regarding language proficiency, gender, and fields of study. Similar learning contexts may explain this result. Indeed, while science and language program students are EFL learners, they use their native language to learn English. In other words, the students in both science and language programs use Thai to learn English. This context creates less English language exposure for the students in both learning programs of study, impacting their overall use of VLS.

Relationship between Vocabulary Learning Strategies

The correlational analysis revealed a significant positive relationship among all VLS. Indeed, all strategies presented a moderate to a high degree of correlation, indicating that the VLS were highly interrelated. Students are likely to employ more than one strategy when learning vocabulary and may use all types of VLS to acquire and learn the English vocabulary. It, therefore, appears that all strategies are closely related, which supports claims that VLS should be employed in combination rather than in isolation (Nie, 2017). In this study, memory and cognitive strategies were the most highly correlated. It suggests that the strategies of
memorization could be a foundation for the use of other VLS. By contrast, determination and social strategies showed the weakest correlation, perhaps reflecting the different characteristics of these strategies. The determination strategy is used when learners discover the meaning of an unknown word alone, whereas the social strategy relies on interacting with others to obtain and retain vocabulary. Nevertheless, these two strategies still shared a moderate, positive relationship, indicating that all categories of VLS can be employed together.

Conclusion
The present study investigated the vocabulary learning strategies in Thai high school learners across different learning programs and found the differences between the vocabulary learning strategies used in various academic programs. The quantitative results of this study revealed that the use of determination strategies was the most, whereas the least frequently employed strategies were the memory category. In terms of the most commonly used strategies, these findings confirmed the findings of previous studies (Fan, 2003; Kongthong, 2007; Pookcharoen, 2011; Komol & Sripetpun, 2011; Nirattisai & Chiramanee, 2014; Rojananak & Vitayapirak, 2015; Panduangkaew, 2018). The use of each strategy depends on various rationales. The current results also found that English-program students outshined science-program students and language-program students in strategic use. Besides, correlation analysis indicated that strategies were interrelated.

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References


Functional Aspects of Interlingual Borrowings: Current Challenges

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Abstract
A particular status of the English language as the language of international communication and connections between the nearly related English and German languages resulted in the emergence of many interlingual borrowings in the Modern English and German language vocabularies. The paper aims to consider the functioning of borrowings (loanwords) in the English and German languages. To reach the aim of the research and to carry out the tasks assigned, the following methods were used: a descriptive method, the method of correlation, componential analysis and, comparative semantic analysis. The paper focuses on linguistic and extralinguistic factors of the German and English interaction. Special attention is paid to clarifying the notion of borrowing in modern linguistic science. The word-formative calques and half-calques (hybrids), which differ from ordinary lexical borrowings by using partially borrowed lexical material, are identified in addition to direct lexical borrowings in the language subsystem under study. The paper demonstrates the significant influence of English borrowings on the structural-semantic qualities of German words, on various semantic changes, as well as on the participation of loanwords in the lexico-semantic variation: synonymy, polysemy, homonymy, and antonymy. The results of the research can also be used in the teaching and learning of both languages, in the course of lexicology or linguistics.

Keywords: English and German languages, external and internal factors, functional aspects, interlingual borrowing, loanwords

Introduction

Modern linguistic science recognizes that one of the most important external factors of language changes and development is contacting of languages, which is one of the most powerful stimuli of language changes (Carstensen, 1992; Rozen, 2000; Siemund, 2008; Vennemann, 2011; Weinreich, 1979). Today, language contacts are regarded as one of the aspects of creative activities in a language.

The researches done over the last years testify to the fact (Dyakov, Kyyak, & Kudelko, 2000; Kapush, 2016) that the language system is complicated in its elementary, structural, functional, and other qualities due to the evolutionary processes, which certify one of the postulates of the modern linguistics on the development of any language. This development takes place as a struggle of the two differently directed tendencies – to preservation and stabilization of the existing language system, on the one hand, and to its adaptation, reconstruction, improvement, on the other hand.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the expansion and emergence of new fields of nomination caused by the rapid development of science, technology, mass media were observed. In different epochs of language development, certain types of nominative processes are in effect. At present, borrowing is an especially active type of creating nominations of any language that is of interest of many linguists of the current time (Dyakov, et al., 2000; Kapush, 2016; Winford, 2010). However, borrowings in the German and the English languages, considering functional aspects, were not the research object.

The paper aims to analyze the specific features of the functioning of borrowings in the German and English languages. To reach this aim, it is required to fulfill the following tasks: to specify the notion of borrowing in the modern linguistic science, to qualify the linguistic and extralinguistic factors that stimulate an entry of borrowings into the lexical-semantic system of English and German; to single out and characterize the types of borrowing that function in the vocabularies of both languages; to identify the influence of borrowings on the semantic (synonymic, polysemic, homonymous and antonymic) processes in the sphere of the vocabulary under study.

The scientific novelty of the paper is in systematic research of interlingual borrowings taking into account the semantics and lexical levels. The significance of the study consists in revealing the interaction of the English borrowed vocabulary with the German one, as well as identifying the main features of their functioning.

Literature Review

The linguists like Haugen (1950), Weinreich (1979), and Winford (2010) have recognized that a study of lexical systems is associated with some systemic characteristics, not only solely linguistic but also socio-linguistic, psycholinguistic, etc., which closely intercommunicate. A prominent place among the characteristics indicated is held by a social-language situation of a "lexical gap" (Karpenko, 1995; Marouane, 2014), which is a motivating factor of unceasing development of the language vocabulary determined by a socially induced need for nominating new denotations which should be satisfied by the language in the process of its evolution. As a rule, this need is satisfied by each language along with the following principal
directions: 1) creating lexical units and their equivalents owing to derivational possibilities and semantic derivation; 2) borrowing ready-to-use lexical units from other languages.

Borrowing is a natural process of language development, and no language in the world, except in very rare exceptions, can avoid contacting other languages. The term "borrowing" is used in modern linguistics in two meanings. In the broad sense, "borrowing" is regarded in connection with the theory of language contact, with the interaction of language systems as one of the ways for an enrichment of the language vocabulary (Haspelmath, 2009; Hock & Brian, 2009).

The term "borrowing" is used in the narrow sense for indicating the process of an entry and adaptation of the vocabulary borrowed which is transferred from one language to another one as a result of language contacts but not as a result of historical (genetic) development for an improvement of the language as a means of communication and perception (Carstensen, 1992; Haugen, 1950).

Direct borrowings are one of the most productive methods of replenishing a language vocabulary. In this case, a direct transfer of phonetic and morphological variants of lexical units occurs from the producer language to the receptor language (Kudelko, 2017). There are two types of direct borrowings: complete and partial ones. The linguists have referred to the first type the lexical units, which emerged in the vocabulary of the language as a result of the process of borrowing both an internal and external form. The second type of direct borrowings is presented by the lexical units that are borrowed if the language contains the notions whose formal and external expression they are. Modern researchers (Dyakov, et al., 2000) have qualified this type of direct borrowings as a partial one. The primary method of their creation is modeling words and constructions after foreign patterns (calque or loan translation) that is a literal translation of word elements from the producer language into the receptor language, for example, in German – *Mittelalter*, in English – *the Middle ages*.

The lexical-word-formative calques (loan-translation) include the borrowings, which have a consequent and literal translation of all elements in the receptor language from the producer language. The researchers identify as half-calques the words or the word combinations created at the moment of translation of a word or word combination by eliminating or adding a certain element. Weinreich (1979) has classified them as loan renditions.

Permanent changes in the vocabulary of any language are testified by its reconstruction, reorganization of multiple interconnections between the vocabulary components, which are conditioned by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Rozen (2000) has emphasized that the linguistic factors include, first of all, empowerment for a more accurate representation of the objective reality, its verbalization, an aspiration for overcoming a nominative deficiency and for the unification of the language means, an ambition of native speakers to fill up, intensify and widen the concept of subject or phenomenon, to work out in detail the notions and features by delimitating their semantic and functional connotations, etc.

In recent decades, quantitative and qualitative changes have been taking place as a result of the influence of extralinguistic factors in the processes of borrowing and adoption of the
vocabulary borrowed. Social and economic development, an introduction of new information technologies, general computerization cause penetration of anglicisms into all languages of the world, step up their adaptation, thus calling for a need for their comprehensive study (Kudelko, 2017).

In addition to the linguistic factors indicated, the extralinguistic factors are also active here, in particular: the penetration of anglicisms into the German language vocabulary is indebted to the fact of recognizing the English language (its American English) as an international language (Carstensen, 1992). Anglicisms serve as a means of filling those holes that arise in connection with a conceptual space extension of the world model, which, in its turn, is the result of the scientific and technical progress of modern civilization.

Mozhova and Sheverun (2018) have held that the process of borrowing a significant number of lexical elements by the English language is an essential driving force in the development of the English language vocabulary.

A relatively progressive tendency of developing many languages of the world towards internalization of scientific and technical terms is an important extralinguistic factor, that is a peculiar projection of the state of existence of a respective field of science, technology, and culture of modern society. Among the extralinguistic factors, it is also worth mentioning various relations of the German people with the English people and with other peoples of the world. Here, one cannot but consider the intercommunal development of the societies, the progress of science and technology, etc. Borrowing a word together with the borrowed subject, phenomenon, quality, action, etc., is a form of implementing such connections. These processes are especially characteristic of the initial stages of developing any language (Kapush, 2016).

At present, the English language is widespread in many countries. English is one of the working languages of the United Nations. A significant amount of fiction and scientific and technical literature is published in it. At the beginning of colonial seizures, when the English language was barely entering new lands, England was a center of the language norm, and it continued to be such a center for quite some time (Rozen, 2000).

At the end of the 19th century, Northern American English began to play an ever-greater role. A particular norm of the English language was formed not only in North America but also in Australia. In addition to the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the English language is used in more than 50 developing countries in Asia, Africa, and America (Durkin, 2014).

Methods
To reach the aim of the research and carry out the tasks assigned, the following methods were used: a descriptive method for systematization, classification, interpretation of the structural, semantic, and functional qualities of borrowings at present of the language development; the method of correlation of the linguistic and extralinguistic phenomena for determining interconnection of historical changes in the life of English and German native speakers and the penetration of borrowings into the vocabularies of the English and German languages; a componential analysis of the lexical meanings for determining and describing the semantic structure of the borrowings under study; a comparative semantic analysis for
identifying the categories which reflect the semantic relations of the borrowings – synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, homonymy, etc.

**Procedures**

The first stage of the study provides for forming a theoretical basis of the scientific research and singling out borrowings in English and German. The theoretical principles of the study are based on using the general scientific methods, namely: a descriptive method, a generalization method that provided an identification of the essential theoretical data on the problems chosen with the purpose of their detailed analysis and description.

The second stage of the research focused attention on a complex analysis of the structural characteristics of borrowings in English and German. A componential analysis of lexical meanings is applied for specifying and describing the semantic structure of the borrowings under study.

At the third stage, a comparative semantic analysis made it possible to reveal the categories, which reflect the semantic relations of the borrowings – synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, homonymy, etc.

**Results**

The researchers have also identified direct borrowings in the analyzed materials. These borrowings carry new knowledge, thus extending the conceptual world model. Complete borrowing provides for adapting a lexical unit to phonetic (sound changes, syllable restructuring) and morphological characteristics (subordination to the system of gender, conjugation) of the language.

The researchers have also identified lexical-word-formative calques and half-calques (hybrids) among the borrowings under study. Table 1 demonstrates some examples of borrowings from English into German.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of borrowings</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>direct borrowings</td>
<td><em>computer, fan, team, to manage</em></td>
<td><em>der Computer, der Fan, das Team, managen</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lexical-word-formative</td>
<td>*letter of credit, fiscal policy, Buyback,</td>
<td><em>der Kreditbrief, die Finanzpolitik, der Rückkauf, Zahlung vor Lieferung</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calques</td>
<td><em>cash before delivery</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>half-calques (hybrids)</td>
<td><em>traveler’s cheque, time charter, Full-time-Job, shopping-center</em></td>
<td><em>der Reisescheck, der Zeitcharter, die Ganztagsarbeit, das Einkaufszentrum</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first German borrowings in the English language vocabulary belong to the 16th century. During this period, the words connected with trade, the art of war, the names of some plants, terms certain professions, social statuses, etc., were borrowed, for example, *halt* "stop," *lance-knight" *Landsknecht," *kreuzer" *kreutzer – the name of a coin," *junker" *cadet."
As long ago as the 16th century England began active mining of ore deposits, developed its metallurgy. At that time, Germany was an advanced country in mining and metallurgy industry, and that is why many specialists were arriving in England from Germany. In consequence of direct communication with German-speaking people, oral borrowing of German words took place first. In written documents, these words emerged not earlier than in the 17th century. Such terms of the mining industry as zinc, bismuth, cobalt and others made their way into the English language from German.

In the 17th century, new borrowings in the spheres of trade and art of war emerged in the English language, for example, **groschen** "farthing, old German silver coin," **drilling** "geology – triplet, a growth of three crystals," **field marshal** "field marshal" and others.

In the 18th century, the influence of the German language on the English language happened to be weaker than that in the previous century. This phenomenon can be explained apparently by Germany's general economic and political decline after the prolonged war. In the second half of the 18th century, some words from geology, mineralogy, and mining were borrowed: **iceberg**, **wolfram**, **nickel**, **glimcher**.

From the end of the 18th century, the language influence of England, as a leading country with advanced technology, was making itself felt increasing. The English lexical units associated with social and political life, trade, industry and finance, railways, and navigation were borrowed into the German language, for example, in public and political life: **das Parlement, das Bill, das Interview**; economic life: **der Export, die Obligation, der Banknote, der Trust**. Many of these English words that became international are derived from French and Latin and a considerable part of English vocabulary, in general. Still, it was the English language wherein some of them acquired that special meaning to enter the international vocabulary.

In the 19th century, the sphere of borrowings from German into English expanded significantly. Some borrowings from the field of Human Sciences, public life, and politics came into existence. A lot of terms were borrowed in the areas of chemistry, physics, linguistics, art. Many of these borrowings are calques or international words. Thus, some terms which also are present in the field of linguistics until now were borrowed, for example, **Indo-Germanic** (Indogermanisch), **Middle English** (Mittelenglisch), **umlaut, ablaut, folk etymology** (Folksetymologie), **Loanword** (Lehnwort). During this period, the English language was penetrated by mean foodstuffs and household items: **marzipan, kohlrabi, schnapps, kummel, kirsch, vermuth**; the terms from the area of music: **leitmotiv, kapellmeister, humoresque; names of animals**: **spitz, poodle**.

Borrowings of the 20th century are characterized by the noticeable dominance of the words associated with war. The most well-known of them are: **black shirt** (Schwarzhemd), **brown shirt** (Braunhemd), Gestapo, Hitlerism, Nazi, storm-trooper (Sturmabteilungsman), the Third Reich (das Dritte Reich), blitzkrieg, bunker, Luftwaffe, Wermacht.

After the First World War, the influence of English on German strengthened, and after the Second World War, it reached an unprecedented scale. As a result of the partition of Germany and the creation of two separate countries with two different social and political
systems, the language development showed a tendency for divergence and formation of stable differential markers that became the object of special attention of the researchers of both German states. The results of language contacts, which were directly dependent on the ruling ideologies in these countries, were also distinctive for the German language in East Germany and West Germany.

The reunification of Germany, a new event in the life of the German nation, gave a new impetus for an anglicism penetration into the German language. The changes in social and political life were closely linked with the language changes. This extralinguistic factor contributed to increasing the number of neologisms to identify the historical events of the transitional period and new social realities: die Maueröffnung, der Mauerspecht, die Umweltunion, die DM-Einführung, die Kontoumstellung, etc.

Analyzing the linguistic material (loanwords) enables us to state that the influence of borrowings in the English and German vocabularies takes place in different ways. Borrowings in the German language have a significant impact on the structural and semantic features of the German words, change their internal structure and stylistic coloring, and contribute to establishing homonymic, synonymous, and semantic relations.

Taking into account the diversity of the borrowing process results, we’ll consider in this work the basic semantic relations in the field of the vocabulary being examined and the specificity of its formation, which are facilitated by English borrowings. Thus, anglicisms facilitate establishing synonymous relations.

Synonyms occupy a central place in semantic relations of any language since they contribute to the differentiation of homonyms and polysemous words. We adhere to the opinion that synonyms emerge readily as factors of more rational denotation, as a result of a new denomination, as a manifestation of consistency, and as a result of borrowing.

The English borrowing Cash came into the German language with the meaning "cash; cash from the till; coins and paper money (checks and promissory notes, which are due to payment)." In German, it is in a synonymous relationship with the terms das Bargeld – die Barzahlung. In this case, the German words specify various undertones of the English borrowing’s meaning.

The historical tradition in the German language is to resist loanwords, to use the word-forming means of the German language to create lexical equivalents to the lexical units borrowed. This tradition led to the emergence of a considerable number of synonymous words of such a type.

An analysis of the language material also shows the presence of various distinctive features, namely: 1) the existence of complete (absolute) synonyms that coincide in all aspects and can be replaced: die Verrechnung – das Clearing "mutual settlement, clearing," die Ausfuhr – der Export "taking out, export (goods)," die Einfuhr – der Import "importation, import of (goods)."
2) Partial synonyms, which partially coincide in their meanings. They differ in the ratio of part and whole, abstract and concrete, etc., but they all serve to express the same notion.

The German word *der Geschäftsführer* has several meanings, namely: 1) administrator, managing director; manager, 2) commercial director. The following synonyms can be selected for the first connotation: *der Leiter, der Verwalter, der Administrator, der Direktor*. And the last two words are borrowed from Latin in their first meaning. The second meaning of the word *der Geschäftsführer* corresponds to the phrase *kaufmännischer Leiter* or the English borrowing *der Manager*. Thus, the following synonymous series are formed: *der Geschäftsführer – der Verwalter – der Administrator – "administrator, manager" and der Geschäftsführer – der Leiter – der Manager – "manager, commercial director".*

3) Relative synonyms, which are such only in the context. The facts of language, which the researchers examine based on semantic oppositions, allow us to consider the analyzed borrowings in close connection with each other. They are interconnected by the relations of oppositions. Thus, borrowings also contribute to the formation of antonymous relations. A qualitative feature in the meaning of a word is required for the emergence of antonymy. Therefore, this semantic category characterizes, as a rule, adjectives and corresponding adverbs and nouns. As a purely conceptual phenomenon, antonymy refers to general vocabulary and terminology. It helps to mark the extreme edges of the terminological field and the logical possibilities of the terminological system: *der Export – der Import; bargeldlos – bar, cash; fester Kurs – frei schwankender Kurs (das Floaten)*.

The development of polysemy is conditioned by the law of asymmetry of the sign and meaning. Thanks to this, the original Lexical-Semantic Variant (LSV), adapting to the specific conditions of different spheres of functioning (different types of text), gives an impetus to the emergence of a new LSV. Semantic variation of lexical units takes place as long as similarity outweighs difference. If the difference starts to prevail, then it is homonymy.

Polysemy, as a semantic phenomenon, is profoundly conceptual and is related only to those words that have clear connections with concepts. A polysemous word is correlated with several concepts (according to the number of LSV), which indicates the absence of direct coincidence of a word and a concept: the word is one, but the concepts are two or several.

An analysis of the factual material under study shows that monosemy and polysemy equally occur in the special and common vocabulary. German term *der Bonus*, originated from English *bonus*, has several meanings, namely: 1) stock exchange premium, premium in exchange transactions; 2) profit, profit share; 3) bonus, discount; free surcharge for a large purchase; 4) export premium. In sports, this word is also used in the sense of "handicap or odds."

Also, the noun *der Change* was borrowed from English into German with several meanings, namely: 1) (bargain) exchange; 2) exchange office; 3) exchange rate.

Homonyms are words that sound the same but have different meanings. This phenomenon is not purely conceptual as synonymy or polysemy is. The primary sources of homonymy are 1) convergence of words; 2) delimitation of two or more meanings of a
polysemous word, divergence; 3) metaphor and metonymy; 4) borrowing from different languages.

The corpus of anglicisms the researchers have studied testifies to one of the presented sources of homonymy. The verb *schiften* in construction means 1) to measure the angles and dimensions of the beams, which are obliquely adjacent to each other; 2) cut surface (beams); 3) to join with nails (beams). The same verb has acquired the meaning "to be replaced (referring to cargo)" under the influence of English *to shift* – "move, shift" and is used in maritime affairs. Abbreviation names can also be homonymous: *Co.* – "cobalt (chemical symbol)" and *Co.* – abbreviation from *Compagnie, Kompanie*.

Language as the primary tool of communication, thinking, and knowledge transfer is constantly evolving. Everything new that appears in our world needs its expression, description, and denotation. The lexical-semantic system of the language reacts as quickly as possible to changes in society and the worldview of a person. Searching for new lexical means for transferring new knowledge activates word-forming processes, changes in the semantics of specific lexical units, and borrowing processes, which are the primary forms of neologisms creation and replenishment of the language word-stock.

In the pandemic of coronavirus infection, significant changes in society and worldview can be observed, as evidenced by the considerable activation of neologism formation and borrowing of new words, which have been occurring in 2020-2021. The word *corona* from the phrase *coronavirus* and the abbreviation *covid* (written in both uppercase and lowercase letters) were borrowed from English, not only by German but also by many other languages. *Covid* was borrowed as anglicism, and users of the languages such as French, Catalan, Spanish, and Italian, as a rule, tend to prefer the masculine gender because of its associations with the (*corona*) virus (Roig-Marin, 2020).

A common way to denote new realities is to use borrowings. As the fight against coronavirus is a global problem for the whole world, new borrowings from English, as a language of international communication, have emerged. The major part of borrowed lexemes are nouns (see Table 2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>borrowings</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Spreading</strong></td>
<td>rapid dissemination of the infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Weaning</strong></td>
<td>slow separation of an intensive care patient from artificial ventilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Lockdown or Shutdown</strong></td>
<td>a period of cessation of economic and social activities at the state level for security reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Containment</strong></td>
<td>suppression of the epidemic by tracking infectious chains, and quarantine of infected people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Contact tracking</strong></td>
<td>identifying contacts of infected persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Hotspot</strong></td>
<td>coronavirus outbreak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Homeworking</strong></td>
<td>work at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <strong>Home Work-out</strong></td>
<td>fitness training at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, the researchers have also observed the borrowing of individual verbs: *tracen* – to track the contacts of digital devices of people (without location data); *tracken* – to track the location of people; *videochatten* – to communicate in video chat.

**Discussion**

Lexical borrowings in the English and German vocabularies hold a significant place. It is explained by the fact that over a long period, England and Germany, in different epochs, fell under the economic, political, and cultural influence of other countries (Vennemann, 2011; Weinreich, 1979).

The analysis of the research results of the linguists (Carstensen 1992; Kapush, 2016) and the conducted research have shown that nowadays, language contacts are especially intense due not only to linguistic but also extralinguistic factors. The scientific and technological progress, the emergence of new scientific directions, and the revision of the traditional scientific knowledge systems require forming new words to denote new concepts, processes, etc. Based on the material analysis and the research results of the linguists, it is possible to make a conclusion (Carstensen, 1992; Haspelmath, 2009; Rozen, 2000; Winford, 2010) that at the end of the 20th century – at the beginning of the 21st century, borrowings become the primary source of replenishment and updating of the vocabulary of any language.

**Conclusion**

The research aimed to consider the peculiarities of the functioning of borrowings in the English and the German languages made it possible to identify two types of direct borrowings: complete and partial. The researchers singled out the lexical-word-forming calques and half-calques among them. It is established that the process of borrowing is multifaceted, and its result is not only the replenishment of the lexicon but also certain changes in the word-stock structure: in the number and composition of different groupings of words, their linguistic relationships, etc. It also contributes to the variability of lexical units. It largely determines this variability, which leads to the formation of polysemy, homonymous, synonymous and antonymous relations in the vocabulary of the English and the German languages.

The results have made it possible to understand the interaction mechanism of the English and German languages in the context of interlingual contacts. The research results can also be used in the teaching and learning of both languages, in the course of lexicology or linguistics.

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Literature in the Algerian EFL Bachelor of Arts degree: Reading Literature

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Abstract
Given the acknowledged and undeniable advantages of literature in language education, it has been integrated into EFL curricula for undergraduate students as an essential subject. In the Algerian English departments before the reform introduced in the last two decades (the Licence, Master, doctorate system), literature used to have a privileged status in terms of the number of courses and number of classes or tutorials. However, after the reform, the importance of literature and the lion’s share that it used to have in the EFL Bachelor of Arts course regressed in favor of more specialized subjects. Such a reform has only worsened the state of the art of EFL literature teaching, which was already in a deplored state according to the will be cited studies. This article aims at pointing at the primary defects or malfunctioning of the first-year literature course by answering the question: what are the main flaws of the first-year EFL literature course? In order to answer this question, the article starts with a review of the whole literature course package, i.e., objective, content, methodology, and assessment. More importantly, to go beyond mere evaluation and criticism, the article ends by suggesting an alternative course that adopts task-based language teaching as a methodology. The proposed task-based literature course attempts to overcome the observed weaknesses or the inefficiencies of the actual course by matching the course objective, content, methodology, and assessment to students’ needs and aptitudes.

Keywords: EFL learners, EFL literature course, language proficiency, literary competence, task-based language teaching

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Introduction

Literature has always been a companion to language teaching ever since introducing this art or this science in the world. This trend started in the 19th century with the grammar-translation method. In those days the means and the main objectives of learning languages were to understand and translate literary texts in the target language (Hall, 2000). Nowadays, the post-method and digital era, literature remains crucial in language teaching, and it is being used in the form of movies and audio-books shared by students and teachers.

All over the world, faculties of languages and faculties of literature are joined to each other and are named faculties of languages and literature. This implies that students who choose to learn a foreign language have to study its literature. The reason behind this intrinsic relationship between language and literature is to be found in the nature of each of them. Brumfit and Carter (1986) assume that there is no distinction between the literary language and the non-literary one and that literature only represents samples from real-life language. In other words, literature and language represent the two sides of the same coin. For the reason that language is the main medium of literature to express high-valued meaning and messages; on the other hand, literature is the shop window through which a language exhibits its samples of beauty. No wonder then that literature serves language learning and has always been part of language learning curricula for decades.

However, it is worth noting that at one time in history, there was a slight regression of the role of literature in language teaching. The high level of exchange between nations created an urgent need to communicate effectively; consequently, language teaching started to be more concerned with real-life communication. There was no time for extended literary texts or even for beautiful poems. The rise of structural and notional-functional syllabuses was the main mark of this period in English Language Teaching (ELT). (Tarvin & Al-Arishi, 1990).

When Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) came to the front scene of language teaching in the 1980’s, the search for authentic materials and genuine communication started. This search led directly to literature that reintegrated language teaching with force. Several CLT researchers argue for the use of literature in ELT (Duff & Maley, 2003; Lazar, 1993; Widdowson, 1975). Among the arguments for the benefits of literature in language teaching, Lazar (1993) stated that literature can help students in promoting their language skills and developing their overall language proficiency; it helps students develop their academic literacy and critical thinking skills; it is authentic and motivating materials; and it encourages cultural understanding.

Nowadays, in the post-method era, the question is not on whether to teach literature or not in EFL curricula but on how to teach it effectively to gain the assumed benefits. These, unfortunately, are far from being achieved in the EFL literature classrooms around the world. The reasons for this gap between the theoretical assumed benefits and the reality of literature teaching are diverse. For example, Bisong (1995) observes that in Nigeria and in the absence of a “systematic training in how to read literary works” (p. 291), students make use of study guides and notes called lectures’ ‘handouts.’ Similarly, in Norway, Wiland (2009) notes, “teachers and textbooks sabotage the aesthetic reading by introducing exercises and questions that are incompatible with the aesthetic reading attitude” (p. 2). In Algeria, Miliani (2003) compares the
situation of literature teaching to that of “a king in rags” in an allusion to the paradoxical and contradictory status of literature in EFL situations.

Indeed, a lot has been said and written about literature teaching in EFL context for decades. Notably, in recent years, the topic has been the concern of several Algerian teachers and researchers. For instance, as students and teacher researchers, the authors of the present article have always wondered about the discrepancy between the assumed theoretical benefits of literature teaching and its dramatic reality. Having been a student in the classical four-year Bachelor of Arts degree, one of the authors of this paper could not understand why second-year students had to read Chaucer and Shakespeare’s King Lear which she couldn’t understand. In contrast, the same students in the third year read relatively easy short stories like *Eveline* by James Joyce.

Inspired by these anecdotal remarks as well as on the vast amount of literature on the topic, the authors of the present paper do not aim to reiterate what has already been observed and written, but rather to systematically review it to pinpoint accurately the deficient areas that cause the plight of literature in the Algerian EFL departments. More importantly, the paper attempts to go beyond mere criticism to propose an alternative approach to teaching literature. This approach is embodied in a task-based literature course which is likely to remedy the observed deficiencies of the present literature syllabus. But before delving into the details of the actual and the proposed literature course, an overview of literature teaching in the Algerian EFL course at the tertiary level is presented.

**Literature Review: Literature in the Algerian EFL Bachelor of Arts Degree before and after the Reform**

After passing the baccalaureate, the Algerian national diploma of secondary education, the students who choose to major in English as a foreign language come to university with a language proficiency level that varies between elementary and intermediate after studying English for seven school years. Before the reform introduced in the Algerian higher educational system, namely the Licence, Master, Doctorate named L.M.D system, these students confronted a four-year Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) course in which the subject of literature had the lion’s share. Within this higher education architecture, which is now known as ‘the classical system,’ students had a course in English literature, a course in American literature, and one in African literature. Each of these courses was studied for one hour and a half session a week, which made the total of four and a half hours of literature taught a week in the third and the fourth year.

However, the study of literature was postponed till the second year; in other words, first-year students used to study only the essential language skills. This situation was in line with structuralism in language teaching, wherein mastery of the language preceded the academic study of literature. The argument was: “If students’ language is inadequate, then let them follow an intensive preparatory course of the language study in their first year (…) only then should they face the terror of ‘real literature’” (Brumfit, 1983, p.2).

Indeed, our Algerian EFL students did face the “terror” of “real literature” since the second year literature syllabus was divided into two courses: the English literature course and the American literature course. Each of these courses contained canonical literary texts graded
following the chronological evolution of literature and literary movements. Thus, second-year students in the classical four-year B.A degree had to read Chaucer, Milton, and Shakespeare in the English literature course. Also, they had to read excerpts from *Of Plymouth Plantation*, and Thomas Pain’s *Common Sense* (see appendix A). The thing that was not self-evident for those students who though completed the first academic year, their language proficiency and their reading experience could not enable them to read, interact, and appreciate such canonical old works. In fact, the rate of failure recorded in literature exams clearly revealed students’ difficulties and lack of motivation in coping with that course. For example, in a study carried out at Algiers University, Belal (2012) reported that the rate of failure in literature exams in the second year during the academic year 2009/2010 was ninety-five percent 95%.

The reasons behind this situation, according to some Algerian professors and teachers, are multiple. For example, Miliani (2003) observed that students were almost illiterate in the domain of literature which showed the decline of the popularity of the subject among the students. According to him, this may be due to the learners themselves, but there might be other causes. Similarly, Bensemanne (2004) noticed that certain teaching practices inhibited the personal thought and suggestions inspired by the literary text, which had consisted the core of literary analysis. In other words, Bensemanne put into question the way of teaching literature that had prevented the interaction between the literary text and the learner. Did the reform bring some changes to this situation?

The reform introduced between 2006 and 2008 in the Algerian higher education came in the aim of modernizing the Algerian university and upgrading the courses taught. One of its significant changes was the shortening of the B.A. course into three years instead of four, and so it made it specialized and more focused on practical knowledge and subjects. Therefore, in the English as a foreign language B.A. course, literature moved down to a secondary position in favor of subjects like English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Information Technology (IT).

Given the shorter time, the LMD students need to get acquainted with literature as soon as they start their university studies. In other words, the study of literature is not postponed till the second year as in the classical system, but it is programmed in the first year under the course title: “Initiation to Anglophone literature.” As the name suggests, the course is no longer fractioned into American literature, English literature, and African literature courses as was the practice in the classical system. Still, it is supposed to include samples of each literature. Yet, the teaching sessions and time allocated to literature have shrunk considerably from three hours in the second year to an hour and a half per week only. Surprisingly, despite the limited teaching time, the supposed condensed content, and the moderate language proficiency level of the first-year students, the initiation to literature course continues to include similar content to that of the second-year classical B.A. English literature course (appendix A). To put it in another way, the freshman undergraduate students have to meet and read “canonized texts which belong to former centuries” (Djafri, 2012, p.109).

As far as the methodology of teaching, that is to say, the teaching techniques of literature within the reform, i.e. in the LMD system, Kheladi (2013) sums up the situation observing: “literature teaching is still regretfully “chalk and talk” practice” (p.94). In another study at the
University of Ouargla (South Algeria), Benzoukh & Keskes (2016) reported that teachers and students are disappointed and unsatisfied with the literature course. Inevitably, these remarks lead to conclude that, unfortunately, the reform did not bring any change to literature teaching except reducing its teaching time. In what follows, the causes of this dissatisfaction or the main weaknesses of the EFL Algerian literature course will be pointed at by reporting on studies and research carried out in different universities in the country.

The main flaws of the Initial Literature Course
Since any course, according to Nunan (1990), is made up of course objectives, course content, methodology, and assessment, each of these four elements in the literature course (in the classical system and the LMD) is looked at and assessed to highlight the shortcomings and the strengths of each of them.

Objectives of the Initial Literature Course
Several educators (Brumfit&Carter, 1986; Hall, 2005; Hirvela, 1996; Lazar, 1993) hold that the main objective of teaching literature, whether in the native language or a foreign language, is to raise students’ aesthetic awareness of literature, or to develop what Culler (1975) calls “literary competence.” In addition to this primary objective, secondary objectives may include: develop student’s language awareness, enrich their cultural understanding, and build their critical thinking.

In contrast, when reading the Algerian literature course, one may realize that the course objectives are stated vaguely. The overall aim of the course is absent; besides, the kind of skills and competencies, which students should acquire by the end of the course, are not highlighted. For example, in the classical four-year B.A. degree, the objectives of the English literature course are stated as follows: “The aim of the course is to provide the students with a general survey in English literature from Chaucer to Blake with an extensive view” (see appendix A). Literally, this would imply that by the end of the course, students should have extensive knowledge about the different authors and literary texts, which have marked the literary scene in a given period, here for example, from the end of the fifteenth century to the end of the sixteenth century. To put it differently, students at the end of the course should have read about the historical evolution of literature and known its prominent authors.

It might be argued that the course objectives were intentionally left vague to allow teachers some freedom in interpreting them according to their understanding of literature teaching. For example, Belal (2012) finds that literature teachers consider developing in the students the skill of reading and appreciating literature more important than providing them with an overview about the literary movements and their authors. Despite this awareness of the main objective of literature teaching, the content of the course dictated by the central administration restricts these teachers in the literature classroom. Besides, according to Benzoukh & Keskes (2016), many of these literature teachers lack the methodological knowledge to help their students with the skills of literature.

The Initial Literature Course Content
Quite expectedly, the selected content of the course matches the course’s stated objectives. Therefore, in the classical second-year literature course as in “Initiation to Anglophone
Literature” of the L.M.D. system, the selected literary works include Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Defoe, Richardson, and American writings of the colonial and the revolutionary period (appendices A and B). Djafri (2012) observes: “Algerian syllabus designers seem to favor a chronological arrangement which provides a historical satisfactory perspective thinking that it best suits the students ‘way” (p.61).

Confronted with such canonical old literary texts, which might present some difficulties even to English speakers, Algerian EFL students ended up reading about the selected literary texts i.e., students read synopsis of the texts, biographies and critical reviews rather than the literary texts themselves. For how can EFL students who are still struggling to process the grammar of the language read and understand Middle English literature? In fact, these students do not possess the language proficiency and the reading experience which allow them to read and interact with these selected texts. Nor do they find these texts appealing to their interest. In this line of thought, Djafri (2012) contends:

The experience has shown that the response and the interaction with a contemporary novel or poem that often offers elements of identification is quite different from a response to a metaphysical 17th-century poem by John Donne whose complexity of structure and idea may not be understood at all (p. 62)

In sum, the content of that course was selected to suit the objective of reading about literature rather than reading, interacting, and responding to literature.

**Methodology of Teaching in the initial Literature course**

To solve this unequal equation (on the one side students’ limited language proficiency in all skills including reading, and canonical, old literary texts on the other side), teachers of literature resort to one teaching methodology, namely, explaining every bit and piece about the literary text (Belal, 2012; Fehaima, 2017; Kheladi, 2013). To put it differently, teachers of literature in our English departments follow a teacher-centered approach wherein they do everything with the literary text, and students have only to listen and take notes. A state of fact confirmed in several studies, for example, after interviewing teachers of literature in the department of English in Tlemcen, Fehaima (2017) finds that most of them “utilize talking and explaining “facts” about literature texts to the students”(p.61). Likewise, Belal (2012) finds that most of the teachers of literature in the department of English in Algiers say that they use lecturing and explaining to the students during most of the class time. On his part, Miliani (2003) compares these classes to a “one-man show, where the narcissist teacher is only intent on listening to himself” (p.46).

This methodological choice may not only be due to students’ incompatible proficiency level with the content, as the teachers presume. It is also due to teachers’ lack of training and updating in teaching techniques and methodology. This is confirmed in a research by Benzoukh & Keskes (2016). The research conducted at the University of Ouargla (south Algeria) found that the teachers interviewed neither had any training on teaching literature, nor did they have knowledge about the different approaches of teaching, and they were not even aware of which teaching strategy they used in analyzing literary texts. In turn, this stems to the fact that most teachers of literature in our English departments majored in literature and cultural studies and had little knowledge about English Language Teaching (ELT).
Assessment in the initial literature course

Assessment is an integral part of any course since it is the way in which we know whether a course or a teaching programme has attained its objectives or not. Therefore, it should obviously follow the course’s stated objectives and test what the course has purported to achieve in the students. It follows that if the literature course objectives are to: “provide students with a general survey in English literature from Chaucer to Blake with an extensive view” (see appendix A), then the literature test should test and finds out whether students have obtained this survey or this knowledge. In other words, the test questions should be relevant to the course’s stated objectives and test students’ knowledge about the literary movements or periods. Paradoxically, teachers design tests that match their understanding of literature teaching objectives, so students receive essay writing questions that measure their ability to comprehend, analyze, and give opinions. These are the core skills of literature that the teachers never trained them to do in their classes.

Conversely, all these students had to do in their literature classes was merely to listen and take notes, as mentioned above, which left them with such a considerable amount of information about literary texts, their authors, and literary movements. In addition, having been used to Freire’s (1972) “bank of education” during all their educational process, these students ended up memorizing all this information to get ready for their literature exams. Belal(2012) found that more than 50 percent of the students involved in her study said that they rote learned teachers’ lectures to prepare for their literature exams; only seven out of thirty students said they relied on their understanding. Unsurprisingly, despite the effort made, most of these students failed these literature exams (the failure rate is mentioned above). The reasons for this massive failure, according to the teachers, are students’ overreliance on memory, their insufficient knowledge of the language, and their misunderstanding of the exam questions (Benzoukh&Keskes, 2016).

The students, on the other hand, kept wondering about what was expected of them in literature exams. In fact, many of them contested how they were evaluated and thought they deserved better marks than the received ones. (Belal, 2012). The teachers, on their part, kept complaining about students’ misunderstandings and inappropriate educational levels.

All in all, there seems to be an incongruence between the literature course’s stated objectives, teachers’ interpretation of these objectives, the course content, methodology of teaching, and ways of assessment. In brief, there is an urgent need to review the whole course package to make it meet the expectations of both the teachers and the students.

The Suggested Task-Based Literature Course

To overcome these shortcomings and weaknesses and draw our students’ attention to the pages of the literary texts themselves rather than their synopsis and critic’s reviews, CLT, with its focus on learner-centeredness, seems to provide the perfect answer. More precisely, TBLT, which is by excellence a learner-centered methodology, is likely to be relevant to teaching literature to freshman undergraduate EFL students. This teaching technique, which consists of organizing the content of teaching around tasks, is susceptible to involving the students in their learning process and so raises their language proficiency and literary competence.
The idea of organizing the literature content or classes around tasks is not new; decades ago, teachers and researchers such as Collie and Slater (1989), Knuston (1993), Lazar (1993), and Paran (2010) (to cite but a few) argued for the relevance of such an approach for teaching literature in EFL classes. However, Most of literature teachers in Algerian universities do not adopt this approach in their classes, according to research (Belal, 2012; Benzoukh & Keskes, 2016; Fehaima, 2017). They seemed either unaware of such an approach or might be reluctant to use a methodology considered more relevant to language teaching than literature as content. What is suggested in using such an approach is not to convert the literature classes into language classes, but it is rather to bridge the gap between language and literature. To this end, the course need to combine literary objectives with literary ones. This, in turn, involves restating the course objectives, reviewing and adapting the content, methodology, and assessment as follows:

Objectives of the Task-based Literature Course

As far as the objectives are concerned, course designers and teachers need to remember that the course is intended for EFL learners and not for native speakers of the language. As a result, language aims and content aims need to be integrated; in another way, the course should have a two-fold objective. The first one is to increase first-year students’ aesthetic awareness of literature (Hall, 2005; Hirvela, 1996) i.e., to develop in students what Culler (1975) calls “literary competence” or a reaction or “a response” to the literary texts according to Brumfit & Carter (1986). The second objective, which is integrated into the first one, is to increase students’ language proficiency.

Since both of these competencies, i.e., literary competence and language proficiency or communicative competence, are achieved through a process and learners go through multiple levels in both of these competencies, it is essential to identify the actual level of the students in each of these competencies via placement tests and questionnaires at the outset of the course. Such identification will enable course designers to highlight the primary skills and sub-skills in the target level, i.e., the level that the course intends to achieve in both literary competence (LC) and language proficiency.

In addition to these two main objectives, secondary or subsidiary objectives are promote students’ cultural understanding, develop their reading skills, and develop their critical thinking skills. In order to attend all of these objectives, the course content, methodology of teaching, and mode of assessment need to be reconsidered and adapted to serve the attainment of these objectives.

Content of the Suggested Task-based Course

Obviously, raising student’s literary competence and language ability is unlikely to be attained by old canonical texts which neither match students’ proficiency level nor their interest, as it was reported by Djafri (2013). Therefore, instead of following the chronological and historical evolution of British and American literature, content selection should fulfill two main conditions: First, the selected texts ought to be accessible to the students. More precisely, the chosen texts should be within “the threshold of linguistic knowledge” of the students (Alderson, 1984, p.4) that is linguistically challenging but not overwhelming. Second, it should be appealing to the students, put in another way the themes and the topics of the literary texts selected ought to be of interest to the students or in which they can find elements of identification.
In addition, to end with Friere’s (1972) notion of “bank of education” and dichotomy “teacher- learner,” students could be involved in the selection of the content. Though some teachers and educators might argue that students do not possess sufficient knowledge about literary texts to involve them in the selection, students may participate in content selection via interviews, class debates, and even questionnaires. During this process, students select the themes appealing to them out of a given list of themes and titles. As a matter of fact, in a study conducted at the University of Oran, Belal & Ouahmiche (2020) showed that first-year EFL students did have some knowledge about literary texts and suggested several titles. By involving students in the selection of the literary texts, course designers will ensure, to some extent that students are reading interesting and involving texts, and so the students will be motivated to read them all and to issue opinions or responses.

Another essential criterion to consider in content selection, if we are to achieve both literary competence and linguistic competence progressively, is the length of the literary texts. Duff & Maley (2003) diagnose four difficulties in teaching literature for EFL at the tertiary level, and one of these difficulties is text length difficulty. Indeed, the longer the text is, the less likely students will read it in its integrity. Course designers and teachers need to bear in mind that these students are in an oral society where “reading is the least of students’ worries” (Miliani, 2003, p.43), so developing this skill should start with relatively shorter texts. That is why it is recommended that short stories, fables, and fairy tales should be the main literary genre selected for first-year students, then move progressively to novellas and novels.

After laying the guidelines for selecting the task-based literature course content, the following question concerns the way it will be introduced and taught, that is to say, the methodology of teaching.

The Task-Based Language Teaching Methodology
Perhaps the most pervasive aspect of the alternative course suggested here is the methodological aspect, namely, the task-based methodology. The idea of TBLT is to organize the language teaching content into a series of tasks. It was Prabhu (1987) and Long & Crookes (1992) who first brought forward this idea. They suggested that if we were to follow the process of language learning, which was found to be rather holistic and consisted of transitional sequences, the content of language teaching should be specified in terms of holistic units, i.e., tasks. Just like language, literature is better seen as a set of skills and competencies than as a body of knowledge to be received from the teacher. In this sense, Brumfit & Carter (1986) argue that “no teacher teaches directly and deliberately anything worthwhile, teachers simply create conditions for successful learning” (p.23). One of these conditions could be carefully designed tasks around literary texts. Such tasks are likely to engage the students with the literary texts and raise their aesthetic awareness as well as their language proficiency.

Broadly speaking, this methodology consists of dividing the study of any literary text into three sequences; each sequence includes several tasks. First, the pre-reading phase, which precedes the reading of the literary text, serves as an introduction to the study of the text. Second, the while reading sequence, which follows introducing the text; it involves students in performing tasks while they are reading. Third, the post-reading sequence comes after reading.
the literary texts. Each of these sequences has some aims and includes several communicative tasks that we will see in detail.

**Pre-reading Tasks**

According to Knutson (1993), these tasks aim to activate the background knowledge with its various kinds (world knowledge, linguistic code, and genre knowledge). This stage epitomizes the content-based approach to teaching literature because it deals with the background knowledge of the literary text, except that here students perform tasks to obtain the information by themselves rather than by listening to the teachers and taking notes.

Among the tasks used in this stage are information exchange tasks or jigsaw activities. The procedure consists of dividing the class into two groups and giving each group a text to read. One text contains biographical information about the author, whereas the other includes the social and historical context of the era of the text. After reading the texts and answering some questions about them, students from each of the two groups are paired up to exchange information about their texts, with the teacher’s supervision, of course. In this way, the socio-cultural background of the text is introduced, and students’ schemata are activated with very little intervention from the teacher. Other tasks in this stage include prediction tasks, and linguistic activities, which involve matching the difficult words in the text with their dictionary definitions.

**While-Reading Tasks**

During this stage, students perform tasks while reading the literary text. The first objective of these tasks is to get students to have close attention to the language of the text so that they can realize how the language serves the literary purpose. The second objective relates to metacognition and consists of making the students activate their metacognitive strategies of control to monitor their reading comprehension.

Among the tasks used in this phase, graphic or advance organizers like charts, semantic webs, Venn diagrams, storyboards, matrices. According to Sasser (1992), the use of these organizers is likely to engage students with meaning as the act of filling in requires critical thinking skills. Instead of teachers or lecturers presenting the elements of fiction, which are also elements of literary competence (Culler, 1975), students can build their knowledge of characters, plot, setting, conflict, and themes by filling in these graphic and advance organizers.

For example, to study characters, we can design a chart containing a column with the characters’ names and another with the adjectives that describe them. Students then read and highlight in the text the adjectives then fill in the chart. They could reword these descriptions and add their own opinion to write characters’ profile. Similarly, the plot or the different elements of the plot could be represented in a chart that students have to complete (see appendix C).

Reading logs is yet another task that seeks to raise students’ awareness of their metacognitive strategies of reading. The technique consists of asking students to make entries in reading logs by answering some guiding questions while reading. Then students compare their entries and answers in groups (Carlisle, 2000). The list of tasks in this stage is endless; teachers
can refer to Collie & Slater (1989) and Lazar (1991) to design tasks suitable for the literary text studied and for their students.

Post-reading Tasks
This stage serves to extend students’ appreciation and to deepen their understanding of the literary work. It is also a synthesis stage which permits students to appreciate the literary text as a whole after a stage where it was segmented into episodes (Harper, 1988)

The tasks that can be designed and performed in this stage include genre transfer, rewriting from a different point of view, comparing the literary text with its film version, continue the story and topic development, or essay writing.

For example, genre transfer consists of asking students to write the literary work in another genre, for instance, rewrite the story in the form of dialogues or a play, and then role-play it. Another task is to ask students in pairs or in groups to rewrite a significant episode of the story from another character’s point of view (McKay, 2001). An alternative post-reading task is comparing the literary text with its film version. As the name indicates, this task consists of asking students to write an essay or give a presentation about the similarities and differences between the literary text and its film version. Continue the story is simply to ask students to imagine an event or other events after the end of the story. Last but not least, topic development is a kind of training for the exam as students work in groups or in pairs to discuss and develop potential exam essay questions. (Baurain, 2007).

Assessment in the Task-based Literature Course
Assessing literature or literary competence is not a simple and straightforward procedure though, in educational settings, it has been left to the common sense of the teacher. Hanauer (1996) asserts: “From historical point of view, the field of literature does not have a tradition of systematic test construction or evaluation. Yet, nearly all literature courses from primary school to university literary education are evaluated using some sort of exams” (p. 143)

Unfortunately, the exams designed by the teachers in the Algerian literature course cultivated failure and literally led to a conflicting situation between the teacher and the students for the reasons mentioned above.

To remedy this situation, the LMD system introduced continuous assessment, and so a mark for continuous assessment has to go with that of summative assessment. For reasons of practicality, teachers resort to short quizzes and tests for a mark of continuous assessment; a practice that goes counter the essence of continuous assessment, whose main objective is to measure students’ progress at different periods.

Given that task-based teaching is a process-oriented approach, continuous assessment seems not only relevant but also practical for assessing students’ progress in acquiring both literary competence and language proficiency, which both develop through a process. In this sense, Nunan (2004) argues: “practically any pedagogical task can be used for assessing learner progress” (p.154). The condition that Nunan (2004) puts to use tasks for evaluation is that teachers should lay the assessment criteria upon which they design observation schedules or
rating scales. A condition that seems rather relevant for the task-based literature course since the course objectives in terms of literary competence and language proficiency were specified at the outset.

As far as summative assessment is concerned, instead of exam questions that foster in the students a habit of memorizing, Carter and Long (1990) proposed language-based question types that drew careful attention to the language of the text and extended to discourse-level activities such as inferring and the application of personal and cultural knowledge. An example of such tests is to ask students to attempt a prose version of a poem or to present students with two versions of a literary text and ask them to determine which one is the original by paying close attention to choices in language. Preferably questions that students had already been trained to answer during the lessons should be selected.

In this way, we can say that we assess students’ ability to read literature rather than their knowledge about literature and make sure that the students had been equally and fairly assessed.

Conclusion
This article has attempted to review literature teaching in the EFL Algerian curriculum at the tertiary level. It demonstrated that the course as it is taught before and after the LMD reform suffers from a number of deficiencies in all its areas. More precisely, it appeared that there was a mismatch or incongruence between the course stated objectives, the course content, methodology of teaching, and assessment. Such state of fact had diverted the course from teaching how to read, enjoy, and react to literature to read about literature and memorize lectures and facts for the sake of exams. This, in turn, led to students’ frustration and teachers’ dissatisfaction.

Such findings implied that the whole literature course needed to be reviewed, which came in the suggested task-based literature course. In this course, the student’s needs and abilities serve as a reference in setting course objectives, content, methodology, and assessment. The most pervasive changes in this course are adapting the content to students’ aptitudes and abilities and involving theses students in their learning by asking them to perform tasks.

Several teachers and researchers (Baurain, 2007; Carlisle, 2000) experienced the use of tasks in literature classes for EFL undergraduate students and reported the positive effect of such tasks for both literary competence and language proficiency. Whether the same effect will be noted in the Algerian context or not is a question to be answered in further research.

What is left to be done, however, is to convince decision-makers, curriculum designers as well as teachers and educators of the necessity of first, taking into account learners’ needs, aptitude and interest while designing courses and syllabuses, particularly literature ones and second involving them in the learning process. Experience has shown that only in this way revolution in education happens.

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**References**


Appendices
Appendix A

The Second year Literature course syllabus of the classical Four-year B.A course
UNIVERSITY OF ALGIERS
FACULTY OF ARTS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ENGLISH DEGREE CURRICULUM

Semester 03:
General survey of English literature from Chaucer to Blake
The aim of the course is to provide the students with a general survey in English literature from Chaucer to Blake with an extensive view.
The experts will serve as a basis for the study of literary devices (plot, setting, characterization...etc).
1) General introduction
2) Old English and Middle English
3) Elizabethan and Jacobean period (poetry and drama)
4) Milton
5) Pope
6) Defoe
7) Swift
8) Richardson
9) Theatre, Sheridan, Goldsmith
10) W. Blake

American literature

Semester 03:
Objective of the course: The aim of the course is to provide the students with a general survey from the colonial period to the romantic period. Excerpts from representative texts will serve as a basis for the study of literary devices.

1- The colonial period
Poetry: selected poems by Anne Bradstreet, Wigglesworth, E. Taylor (2h)

2- The revolutionary period
Prose: extracts from T. Pain, B. Franklin, Madison, Hamilton (2h)

3- The Romantics
W. Irving: Rip Van Winkle
J.F Cooper: The Spy of the Prairie
N. Hawthorne: The Blithedale Romance or the Celestial Road (2h)
(NB: this document was delivered by the Head of the English department at the university of Algiers in the academic year 2009/2011)

Appendix B
The first Year literature syllabus of the L.M.D. system

Université Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Oran 2
Faculté des Langues Etrangères
Département : Anglais
Feuille Pédagogique : Programme par matière

Matière : Etude de textes littéraires
« Study of Literary Texts »

Contenu de la matière
Semestre 1

Week 1. Introduction to literature
The notion of literature: meaning of literature, its purpose and importance. Genres (fiction/nonfiction, prose/verse/drama...)

Week 2. Introduction to literature (continued)
- The notion of literature: what shapes it? Influence of gender/race; Religion and mythology; impact of wars... etc.

Week 3. The elements of fiction (The 6 major elements in selected texts)

Week 4. Characters / Plot

Week 5. Setting / Point of view

Week 6. Theme / Style

Week 7. Test

Week 8. Introduction to figurative language

Week 9. Interpreting figures of speech in context

Week 10. Metaphor / Simile

Week 11. Hyperbole / Understatement / Oxymoron

Week 12. Metonomy / Synecdoche / Personification

Week 13. Irony / Humor / Personification

Week 14. Exam

Semestre 2

Week 1. Development of English / Emergence of movements (an overview)

Week 2. Old English Literature (450 AD-1066): a historical survey

Week 3. Selected Texts / e.g. Beowulf, Caedmon's Hymn, The Wanderer... and others.

Week 4. Middle English Literature (12th century-1485): a historical survey

Week 5. Selected Texts / e.g. Chaucer's The Prologue, Sir Gawain and the Green knight, Everyman: A Morality Play, and others.

Week 6. The Elizabethan Period / Renaissance and Reformation (1485-1603): a historical survey

Week 7. Selected Texts: Shakespeare (and others).

Week 8. The golden age of drama / Selected plays: The Merchant of Venice, Othello, and others.

Week 9. Test

Week 10. The Seventeenth Century: a survey

Selected Texts / The Metaphysical School

Week 11. Introduction to Restoration and the 18th century: Neoclassicism and Satire

Week 12. Selected texts / e.g. John Gay’s Trivia, Pope’s The Rape of the Lock, Essay on Man, Dryden’s Epigram on Milton, and others.

Week 13. The rise of the novel (1700’s)

Selected texts / e.g. Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, Samuel Richardson, and others.

Appendix C

A Sample Task-Based literature unit for the study of Irving’s Rip Van Winkle

Outcome of the unit: By the end of the unit students will have acquired knowledge about the characteristics of Romanticism in literature; they will have developed their reading skills by reading the story fully; they will have analyzed the literary devices and responded personally to the story; and they will have extended their vocabulary and practice their speaking and writing skills.

Lesson 1

1) Pre-reading tasks:

Objectives: The aim of these tasks is to activate the background and the linguistic knowledge of the students by getting information about romanticism and Irving. Also, the tasks aim to raise their interest in reading.

Stage 1:

The class is divided into two groups. Group A read an extract about romanticism, and group B read an extract from Washington Irving biography. Then, each group answers the questions below each extract.
(N.B: Extracts giving information about the Catskill Mountain and the Dutch settlers in New York can be used to activate student’s schema knowledge.)

**Stage 2:** Students from group A join students from group B and in pairs or groups of three to four students exchange information about their articles.

**Stage 3:** In pairs students jot down the themes that can be read in a work of literature written by Irving within the Romantic period and then compare their ideas.

**Task 2**

The teacher writes on the board the following words:

- Rip Van Winkle
- Hen-pecked husband
- Termagant wife
- a good-natured fellow
- He was thrice blessed
- Meekness of spirit
- A shrew
- A strange man

Working in pairs or in groups, students are asked to brainstorm a narrative link between the words to tell a story. Then, in class students compare their stories.

**II- While-reading tasks:**

**Lesson 02:**

**Objective:** The aim of this lesson is to give the students a purpose for reading and to sensitise them to the way an author presents a description or a theme. The literary aims include the study of the setting and the characters.

**Task 01:**

**Stage 01:** Students skim through the two first paragraphs and then work in groups. Group A: extract the words and the adjectives that describe the Kaatskill, then put the words under the following headings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colours</th>
<th>Verbs of movement</th>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Supernatural/unusual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Locate the mountains in the map of the U.S and draw a picture of the mountains following the description.

Group B: extract words that describe the village then arrange them according to the word category.

Draw a picture of the village following the description.

**Stage 02:** Members of group A pairs up with members of group B and exchange the pictures they draw. They, then, discuss the effect that such a description produce. What does this description lead them to expect from the story? What personification is used for the Kaatskill mountains?

**Stage 03:** Pretend that you are a film director, how would you film the opening setting?

**Task 02:**

Read the extract from “in that same village... he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation”.

**Stage 01:** Complete the following charts with the adjectives and words that describe Rip, his wife, his dog, his children and his farm.

**Chart 01:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The narrator’s opinion</th>
<th>As seen by his neighbours, the children and the good wives of the village</th>
<th>His wife’s opinion</th>
<th>Your own opinion about Rip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rip Van Winkle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 02:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dame Van Winkle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The narrator’s opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As seen by her neighbours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rip’s opinion of her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your own opinion and ideas of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 03:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rip’s family and possessions</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wolf the dog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His farm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 04: complete the chart by defining the attitudes and relations between the three characters.

Stage 2: Students write a character profile for each of the characters then compare their answers in pairs and justify them by referring to the language of the text.

Stage 3: Do you know a person like Rip or his wife? What traits do they share with the characters of the story? Do you find anything amusing or funny about the relationship of Rip with his wife? Pick up the words and phrases that arouse amusement.

III) Post reading tasks

Lesson 3 or 4

Objectives: the aim of these tasks is to expand students’ understanding and appreciation of the short story and to raise their critical thinking by exploiting the themes of the story in creative writing.

Stage 1: Students work in groups and choose one of the following tasks to perform in groups.

Task 1: Suppose that you are Rip rewrite what happened to you from the day you went shooting squirrels in the highest part of the Kaatskill Mountains till your return to the village and your gathering with your daughter.

Task 2: Retell the story from Dame Winkle point of view.

Task 3: Rip consoled himself by frequenting a group of sage, but he was driven out by his wife. Imagine the scene the scene that might have happened in the inn. Work in groups of three or four students and role play a dialogue between Rip, his wife Dame Van Winkle, and Nicholas Vedder.

Task 5: Romantic heroes are generally childlike, distrustful of women, fond of nature, in search of higher truth, find lines from the story to describe each character trait.

Stage 2: Each group presents the outcome of their task to the class.
The Predictive Ability of High School General Point Average, Standardized Test for English Proficiency, and Type of High School to Foresee the Academic Success of Saudi EFL Freshmen

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Abstract
Although many studies have examined the ability of admission tests and High School General Point Averages to predict academic performance, they are not in agreement whether or not, these two measures are an entirely sufficient criterion to foretell college learning success. In addition, there seems to be a gap in the literature concerning using the type of high school (private or public) a student attends as a supportive measure to the two criteria mentioned above. This study tried to answer the research question, which is: to what extent can student's high school point average, admission test, and the type of school he attended predict his academic performance? The research carries a considerable significance as it cast light on some factors that may foretell the academic success of a college student. The study investigated the predictive capability of students' high school general averages, admission test, which is Standardized Test for English Proficiency, and student's type of high school to predict freshmen's academic success as defined by their college General Point Averages at the end of their first year. The present study utilized regression analysis to analyze the data of 100 students who finished their first year at the college of languages and translation, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arabia. The study findings indicated that the admission test was the best predictor for students' performance. In contrast, surprisingly, students' HSGPAs and the type of school they attended had little significance in determining the attainment of college students. Thus, it is suggested that the entry test be considered an essential measure for admission to the Saudi college.

Keywords: academic success, criterion, future performance, high school general point average predictive ability, Saudi EFL Freshmen, admission test

Cite as: Alotaibi, N. (2021). The Predictive Ability of High School General Point Average, Standardized Test for English Proficiency, and Type of High School to Foresee the Academic Success of Saudi EFL Freshmen. Arab World English Journal, 12 (2) 348-363. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no2.24
Introduction.

The significance of predictive validity arises when a specific criterion is utilized to predict the likelihood of some future performance. It refers to the extent to which a person's future level on the measure is predicted from prior test performance (Crocker & Algina, 1986; Messick, 1989). Postsecondary educational counselors and admissions personnel have always been concerned with predicting new students' success in the college-level study (McPerson & Schapiro, 2008). According to Marsh et al. (2008), many studies have revealed that 70 to 75 per cent of incoming university students who will drop out of college do so in the first year or the second. Thus, great attention is being paid to the ways new learners take when they join colleges and the subsequent difficulties students may encounter in the course of completing their studies (Bracco, 2014; Dadgar, Collins, & Schaefer, 2015; Scott-Clayton, Crosta, & Belfield, 2014). A crucial pinpoint in this regard is placing a student in the right college or program that matches his/her learning abilities. To fulfill this target, admission counselors and college officials usually suggest some admission requirements that can foresee the possibility of students' success in the desired college or institute. To save new learners a world of grief and struggle, incoming learners are usually admitted or rejected based on particular cognitive admission criteria. Among these admission requirements are high school grade point average (ACT, 2009; Atkinson & Geiser, 2009; Silva, 2008; Zwick & Sklar, 2005) and standardized test scores (Jerald, 2009; Silva, 2008). Clinedinst, Hurley and Hawkins, (2011) argue that grades in college preparatory courses, the strength of the high school curriculum, admission tests, and high school general point averages (HSGPAs) are good indicators of academic success. A survey conducted by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) indicated that standardized tests such as SAT and ACT scores are ranked second on the scale of factors considered in admission decisions after high school grades (Hawkins & Lantz, 2005).

This study is believed to be of great significance for all learning elements (students, students' families, and learning institutions). It can help to reveal some elements that may effectively predict academic success. Thus, students who show better academic preparation in the admission criteria are likely to succeed and complete their college studies with acceptable scores (Radunzel & Noble, 2012). For learners, this success means that they have achieved a desirable educational goal with fundamental implications for their futures. For colleges and institutions, on the other hand, student success is evidence that their plans and admission policies have been successful. The student's family, on the other hand, will be glad since their son/daughter is going on the right track, and the study expenses spent on him/her have not gone in vain.

The prevailing belief of college admission makers is that a combination of scores of standardized college admission tests, such as Standardized Test for English Proficiency (STEP), and high school grade average can predict students' success in the college-level study (Camara & Echternacht, 2000, ACT, 2009; Kobrin,, Patterson, Shaw, Mattern, & Barbuti. 2008; Rothstein, 2004). Admission professionals contend that admission decisions should not be based on a single measure. Researchers repeatedly insist that using more than one admission criterion is more likely to help predict students' success in their first-year study than utilizing a single measure (Sawyer, 2010). Despite being considered the best single predictor of college study success, it is claimed that HSGPA alone cannot be regarded as an adequate criterion for university admission because grading standards vary across high schools and classrooms. In addition, it is usually alleged that some teachers, especially in private schools, feel pressured to give learners high
grades despite the middling academic level of their students, a phenomenon known as grade inflation. Some high schools, however, may be too rigorous that students have to make excessive efforts to gain high marks. Standardized admission tests, on the other hand, are not immune to deficiencies. They are alleged to be biased and benefit only students who can afford the cost of private lessons to prepare for the test. Although they are known to boost many benefits such as standardization, efficiency, and opportunity, entry tests are also said to do not measure specific academic aspects such as persistence and motivation, and they can only reveal cognitive competence.

The objective of this correlational study is to examine the predictive ability of HSGPAs and an admission test, STEP, to foresee freshmen's performance at the end of their first-year college study. The study also intends to assert/or refute the frequent allegation that graduates of private schools are usually given high grades despite their low academic levels. When joining colleges, these students typically struggle with their study compared with graduates of public schools. Therefore, the type of high school (private or public) attended by the study subjects is also under investigation. The use of these three predictive measures also aims to fill the gap in the literature of admission procedures.

This study aims at investigating the performance of Saudi, male, freshmen via three predictors: HSGPAs, an entry test (STEP), and the type of high school a student graduated from (whether public or private).

To fulfill the study purpose, the present research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do students' grades on the university admission test (STEP) predict their first-year college GPA in the college of languages and translation, IMISU?
2. To extent do students' high school GPAs predict their first-year college GPA?
3. If any, what relationship is there between the type of students' high school (whether public or private) and their first-year college GPA?

**Literature Review**

A considerable figure of studies has been conducted to investigate the ability of students' HSGPAs and their scores on the standardized admission tests to predict new students' success in college-level research.

Many studies have consistently demonstrated that entrance test scores and HSGPA records are valid criteria for gauging early college success as measured by first-year college GPA (Allen & Robbins, 2010; Allen, Robbins, Casillas, & Oh, 2008; Noble & Radunzel, 2007; Robbins, Allen, Casillas, Peterson, & Le, 2006). A huge number of predictive validity studies reveal that HSGPA is the best predictor for first-year college GPA and that the scores of the standardized entrance test do add a statically significant value to the prediction. Therefore, utilizing both measures can make better results than using HSGPA alone. Perfetto (2002) argued, "The combination of high school grades and standardized test scores has been part and parcel of evaluating applicants for admissions" (p. 31). Further, in a study carried out by Westrick, Le, Robbins, Radunsel, and Shmidt (2012) on 50 institutions, they found that the estimated mean
relationship with first-year college GPA across institutions was 0.51 for the standardized test (ACT) score and 0.58 for HSGPA.

In a review of more than 60 studies, Mathiasen (1984) revealed that HSGPA and standardized admission test scores are the best predictors of college-level performance. They account for nearly 25% of the variance when predicting first-year college GPA. Furthermore, in a meta-analysis study, Elert (1992) stated that HSGPA was a twice as good a predictor of college performance than college admission test scores, with college entrance scores accounting for approximately 5% extra variance in the prediction model. The researcher said that the power of college admission tests is in predicting the GPAs of first year, and, after that year, their predictive strength disappears. This conclusion is in line with the findings of the studies mentioned above.

Analysis of research conducted in 2003 on 80000 learners admitted to the University of California revealed that a student's high school GPA is more accurate in predicting student's success than do the admission tests. The research showed that high school grade average consistently predicts a learner's performance for the whole college study period. Moreover, the significance of high school GPA increases during a student's collegial study, which means that the higher the high school GPA a student has, the bigger chance he/she has to be successful at the college level.

A study carried out by Rel Northwest Institute, 2016 investigated the developmental education (remedial, noncredit bearing courses) and college preparedness for new coming students at the University of Alaska and their performance in college English and math courses. The study showed a strong positive correlation between the learner's high school GPA and success in college courses. The research attributed this correlation to the fact that high school GPA considers the features of student's learning such as motivation and academic persistence that cannot be gauged by standardized tests.

In another study that, partly, supports the conclusions of Rel Northwest investigation, and California analysis, Vulperhorst, Lutz, de Klijn, & van Tartwijk (2018) conducted a study to compare the predictive validity of HSGPAs with three high school subjects to foretell the performance of Dutch pre-university (VWO) and International Baccalaureate (IB) graduates. The study findings revealed that for VOW students' HSGPAs were better predictors of first year and final GPA achievements. For IB graduates, by contrast, the study showed that HSGPA alone was not accurate measure for predicting final year performance. Therefore, after first year, HSGPA should be used in association with fist-year GPA to foretell final GPA achievement. Thus, the study rejected the use of HSGPA as a single measure for future academic success. It can be seen that the findings of this study are in contrast with the results of the two studied above in relation to utilizing HSGPAs as a single admission criterion.

Hiss's (2014) study analyzed student and graduate records from 123000 learners in 33 colleges where SAT or ACT scores are optional entrance criteria. Findings revealed a strong correlation between high school GPA and college GPA. The study also said that students with high scores for admission tests, such as SAT or ACT, and lower high school GPAs strive with lower college performance and lower college graduation rates.
In two recent studies, Nagy M. and Molontay R. (2021) studied the predictive validity of the Hungarian university entrance score final university achievement. The study concluded that the test is a valid admission criterion and can predict future academic performance of Hungarian university students. The findings of the study also indicated that HSGPA is also a valid predictor of university study success. In the other study, Ali, Ali & Afzal (2019) examined the predictive validity of a Uniform Entrance Test for health professionals. The study concluded that students' test scores correlate positively with their academic success. The results of these studies are in a stark contradiction with the conclusions of some studies (Camara & Echternacht, 2000; Geiser & Santelices, 2006; Hiss & Franks, 2014).

However, the literature revealed a point of view claiming some drawbacks of the ability of entry tests to significantly predict college success and persistence (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984; Levin & Wyckoff, 1994; Burton & Ramist, 2001). Adherents of this view contended that these admission tests measure only the test-taker's cognitive skills, and that they do not provide a fair prediction of college performance for learners from minority groups. Supporters of this stand encouraged the utilization of noncognitive predictors (Wigdor & Garner, 1982; Tinto, 1993; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984).

Other studies have also investigated the role of noncognitive predictors of study success, such as metalinguistic skills (Zeegers, 2001), study motivation (Melancon, 2002), and personality characteristics (Ridgell & Lounsbury, 2004). Further, in a meta-analysis study, Crede and Kuncel (2008) examined the predictive validity of the study habits, skills, and attitude in predicting study success. The results showed that the study habits, skills, and study motivation, among other factors, played a role in the incremental variance (ranging from .04 to .12) in the college level performance beyond HSGPA and standardized test scores.

It can be seen from this presentation that most of the studies suggest that HSGPAs and entry tests can be a reliable measure for detecting the possibility of university students' success. Some studies, however, do not support the use of a single admission criterion, such as HSGPA. Instead, these studies contended that using more than one admission measure is likely to be valid and reliable and can accurately predict the future performance of university students.

**The Nature of the Entrance Test (STEP)**

Step (Standardized Test for English Proficiency) is a standardized, 100-grade test recognized by the Saudi National Center for Assessment, under the supervision of the ministry of higher education in Saudi Arabia. It is of an objective nature and assesses four skills: reading comprehension (40) grades, grammatical structure (30), listening comprehension (20) grades, and Writing analysis (10) grades. The test is of medium complexity and is more accessible than TOEFL and IELTS. Incoming students who tend to join the College of Languages and Translation, IMISU, must gain 55 grades or above on the STEP.

**Methodology**

This quantitative study concentrated on the students' first-year attainment because it is the best measure for learners' future achievement. It is a significant indicator of students' need for extra support. Further, first-year college GPA is considered a significant predictor of subsequent outcomes such as retention, continued persistence, and degree attainment (Allen, et al., 2008).
The Predictive Ability of High School General Point Average

Instruments

The study used regression analysis to assess the extent to which high school grade point average and standardized exam scores predict performance in college-level courses, and to see if the type of high school a student attends has an impact on his college performance. The dependent variable, students' achievement at the end of their first-college year, is gauged by three academic measures: HSGPA, admission test, and the type of school attended by the student. In Saudi Arabia, HSGPA is calculated out of 100 points, while in IMISU, university GPA is calculated out of 5. Less than 2.75 is considered a poor level, 2.75-3.74 is good, 3.75-4.49 is very good, and 4.50-5 is distinction level.

Participants

The population of the study is the Saudi EFL, newcomers who completed their first year at the College of Languages and Translation, IMISU, (KSA), and the study subjects are one hundred randomly chosen male, Saudi students. All cohort students completed their first year in the second semester of 2018. Sixty-one learners of the study sample are private school graduates, while thirty-nine graduated from public schools.

Data Collection and procedures

The study subjects' first-year GPAs and STEP scores were obtained from the students' affairs office at the college of languages and translation, while students' types of high school were obtained from the database of the deanship of admission and registration deanship, IMISU.

Results

STEP predictability and students' performance

To fulfill the purpose of this analysis, which was to explore the ability of the entrance exam (STEP) to predict first year's performance of the students of the college of languages and translation, IMISU, the necessary statistics were made. The first-year college GPAs of the 100 randomly chosen first-year students and their STEP scores were calculated using the SPSS. Pearson correlation coefficient was employed to find the correlation coefficients of the students' grades. Further, the equation of the simple linear regression was identified to investigate the predictive ability of STEP to foresee freshmen's GPAs, as the following table reveals:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.757</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>72.89</td>
<td>12.588</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that the students' number is 100 and their mean on STEP is 72.89 out of 100, and the standard deviation is 12.588. The table also indicates that the freshmen's mean of the first-year's GPA is 3.757 out of five, and the standard deviation is 0.719. The following table shows further data:

Table 2. Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year1</th>
<th>Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Year1</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step</td>
<td>0.399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>Year1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table two above reveals that the number of study subjects is 100, and the Pearson correlation coefficient of students' first-year GPA and their performance on STEP is 0.399. This shows a strong positive relationship between the two variables, since the value of the correlation coefficient has a statistical significance (α≥0.05) because the value of the statistical significance (p-value) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. More information follows in the table below:

Table 3. Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. the error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Step
b. Dependent Variable: Year1

Table three indicates that the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.399, and the square correlation coefficient is 0.159, which indicates the percentage of variance in the dependent variable (students' first-year GPA), which we can predict by the independent variable (the students' scores on STEP). The square adjusted correlation coefficient is 0.150, and the value of the estimated error is 0.662. More data about the variance analysis is in the following table:

Table 4. ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>8.128</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.128</td>
<td>18.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>43.007</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.439</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51.134</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Year1
b. Predictors: (Constant), Step

Table four is concerned with the analysis of variance, used to tell whether or not the level of regression has a statistical significance. Since the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, this means that the regression has a statistical significance (α≥0.01), and this indicates that there is a strong relationship between the dependent variable and the independent one. Further data about coefficients follows:

Table 5. Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.098</td>
<td>0.391</td>
<td>5.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.399</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Preparatory

Based on the information offered in table five above, the constant value is 2.098, and the independent variable is 0.023. This means that the regression equation is:

\[ Y = 2.098 + 0.023(X) \]
To further make sure that the data we study meets the conditions required when analyzing the linear regression, it is necessary to check the residuals and the graphs, which can tell whether or not those conditions are met. The following graph represents the regression line with spots on and around that line (standard p plot).

![Graph 1. Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual](image1)

*Figure 1. Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual*

Figure one indicates the data gather around the straight line, and this asserts that the values of the residuals have natural distribution, which is one of the requirements of utilizing the linear regression analysis.

Figure two below shows the form of residuals distribution and the expected values. Because the way of residuals distribution does not follow a specific pattern, this meets the linearity condition, the linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, which is also one of the linear regression conditions.

![Graph 2. Scatterplot](image2)

*Figure 2. Regression Standardized Value 1*

Table 6. The mean and standard Deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.757</td>
<td>0.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>91.400</td>
<td>5.935</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Predictive Ability of High School General Point Average

This analysis aims at exploring the predictive ability of students' HSGPAs to foresee freshmen's college GPAs. SPSS was used to calculate the high school scores of the 100 selected students. Then, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was employed to find the correlation coefficient among the study subjects. Finally, the equation of the simple regression was calculated to investigate the capability of the HSGPAs to predict students' first-year GPAs.

Table six reveals that the mean of the secondary schools' scores of the 100 students is 91.400 out of 100, and the standard deviation is 5.935, while the mean of the students' first-year GPAs is 3.757, and the standard deviation is 0.719. Further correlational data is included in the following table:

Table 7. Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Year1</th>
<th>Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table seven indicates that Pearson's correlation coefficients of students' HSGPAs and their first-year college GPAs are identical, 0.124. This shows a weak but positive relationship between students' performance in high school and college with a correlation coefficient of ($\alpha \geq 0.05$). This value has no statistical significance since it is 0.110, which is more significant than 0.05. More correlational information follows in the table below:

Table 8. Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. the Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.7168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Secondary school GPA  
b. Dependent Variable: First-year college GPA

According to table eight, the correlation coefficient is 0.124 while the square correlation coefficient is 0.015. This indicates the ratio of variance in the dependent variable (students' first-year GPAs), which can be predicted by the independent variable (HSGPAs). The adjusted square correlation coefficient is 0.005, and the error of the estimate is 0.7168. The table underneath presents variance analysis information:

Table 9. ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>1.520</td>
<td>0.221b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>51.134</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: First-Year College GPA  
b. Predictors: (Constant), HSGPA
Table 9 shows variance analysis which aims to investigate whether or not the regression has a statistical significance. Since the p-value is 0.221, which is bigger than 0.05, this indicates that the regression has no statistical significance (α≥0.01). This finding suggests that there is no strong relationship between the dependent variable and the independent one. More regression data is in the table underneath:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.389</td>
<td>1.112</td>
<td>2.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>1.233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dependent Variable: first-year college GPA**

Table ten reveals that the constant value is 2.389, and the independent variable coefficient (X) is 0.015, which means that the regression equation is:

Y = 2.389 + 0.015 (X)

To further make sure that the data employed meets the conditions required when using the analysis of the linear regression, the study of residuals and graphs is utilized. The following graph represents the regression line on/or around which appear the dots. This line is called the normal p plot.

![Graph 3. Normal P -P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual](image)

**Figure 3. Observed and Expected Cum**

Figure three indicates that the data gathered around the straight line, and this shows that the values of residuals have average distribution, which is a requirement for using the linear regression analysis. More data of residuals follow:
Figure 4. Regression Standardized Value 2

Figure 4 shows the residuals distribution form with the expected values. Since the distribution does not follow a specific pattern, this fulfills the linearity condition, which indicates the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. It is also worth mentioning here that random distribution of residuals with the expected values is also a requirement for linear regression.

The relationship between the type of high school and students' GPAs

This analysis is related to differences in freshmen's 1st-year college GPAs attributed to the types of secondary school they graduated from (whether public or private), t-test of the two samples was utilized to investigate the differences between the means of the two groups. Results are exhibited in the table 11 below:

Table 11. Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private HS</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.706</td>
<td>0.728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public HS</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.836</td>
<td>0.705</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 11 reveals, graduates of private schools are sixty-one students, and their mean is 3.706 out of five, and the standard deviation is 0.728, while graduates of public schools are thirty-nine, and their mean is 3.836 out of five, and the standard deviation is 0.705. More data about mean differences is underneath:

Table 12. Independent Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.706</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>-0.881</td>
<td>0.380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.836</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to indicating the numbers of private and public school's graduates and their means, the table above also reveals that the degree of freedom is 98, and the t value is 0.880. The table further shows that the p-value is 0.380, which is more significant than 0.05, suggesting that there are no statistical significance differences between the means of the graduates of the two high school types.
Discussion

In this study, the predictive ability of three factors: (1) admission test, (2) high school general point average (HSGA), and (3) the type of student's high school was examined to see if they can foretell Saudi EFL students at the end of their first college year.

If this study's findings showed that students' HSGPAs and scores on Standardized Test for English Proficiency (STEP) correlate positively with students' academic attainment, admission officials should depend on these two measures as admission or placement criteria. Likewise, if the performance of private schools' graduates proved to be poor, as alleged, private HSGPAs as an admission measure, should be reconsidered.

The results of analyzing students' scores on the admissions test (STEP) suggest that they correlate positively with learners' learning success. That is, there is a strong relationship between a student's admission test score and his academic attainment at the end of first year at college. Table two indicates that the Pearson correlation coefficient of the dependent and the independent variable is 0.399, which reveals a high correlation between admission tests and student's performance. When considering the analysis of variance as shown in table four, it can be seen that the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This reveals that the regression has a statistical significance and shows that there is a strong relationship between students' STEP scores and their first-year college GPAs.

The linear regression result also supports the positive correlation between the dependent variable and the predictor one. As figure one reveals, data is gathering around the straight line, which suggests that the values of the residuals have natural distribution.

The results further assure the relationship between the criterion variable and the independent one in the way residuals are distributed. Since residuals do not follow a particular pattern in their distribution, this fulfills the condition of a linear relationship between the two variables in hand. The results of the relationship between the admission test and the first-year college GPA is in line with several studies (Scott-Clayton, 2012, Evans, 2012; O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007, Adelman, 1999).

The findings of this research question go in line with a number of studies (Radunzel & Noble, 2012, Allen & Robbins, 2010; Allen, Robbins, Casillas, & Oh, 2008; Noble & Radunzel, 2007; Robbins, Allen, Casillas, Peterson, & Le, 2006), but run contrary to other studies findings (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984; Levin & Wyckoff, 1994; Burton & Ramist, 2001).

Moving to question, two which investigates the predictive validity of high school GPAs to foresee students' performance at the end of their first year of college, the study findings reveal no significant relationship between the two variables. As the Pearson coefficients of the dependent and independent variables are identical (0.124), this reflects that the correlation coefficient of students' attainment and their high school GPAs is (α≥0.05), which has no statistical significance because it is 0.110, which is more significant than 0.05.

After investigating the statistical significance of the regression by analyzing the variance, as shown in table 9, the p-value comes to be 0.221, which is more significant than 0.05. This means that the regression has no statistical significance (α≥0.05). Therefore, as this result suggests,
there is no strong correlation between a Saudi student's HSGPA and his first-year performance at the college. The findings of this research question are in contrast with various studies' results which claim positive relation between students' HSGPA and first-year college attainment (Munro, 1981; Lawlor, Richman, & Richman, 1997; Peltier, Laden, & Martranga, 1999; Snyder, Hackett, Stewart, & Smith, 2003; Camara & Echternacht, 2000; Tross et al., 2000; Fleming & Garcia, 1998; Fleming, 2002; Hoffman, 2002; Zheng et al., 2002; Gose, 1994, Rel Northwest, 2016, William C. Hiss, 2014, Geiser & Santelices, 2007, Hiss & Franks, 2014).

The findings of the research question three, surprisingly, refute the prevailing belief that the performance of public school's graduates out-perform the performance of private school learners at college-level study. It is repeatedly claimed that students of private high schools usually take high grades that do not mirror their actual academic level. Therefore, these students generally struggle when they join universities. However, the result of this part of the study suggests, as shown in table 11, that there are no statistical differences between the means of public and private high schools since statistical significance is 0.380, which is more significant than 0.05.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the predictive validity of students' high school grade point averages, admission test scores, and the type of high schools attended to foretell academic performance. The findings of this study underscore the precise value of the Standardized Test for English Proficiency as an admission criterion for predicting the likelihood of students' academic success. The study results showed a strong correlation between students' test grades and their first-year college GPAs.

The second predictive measure, High School General Point Average, seemed to be of less efficacy to predict students' future learning attainment. Therefore, admission personnel should not rely heavily on this measure as it proved to be less effective for that purpose.

Concerning the type of student' high school, the results revealed that students' performance is not highly affected by the kind of high school a student graduated from. This, however, runs contrary to the common claim that graduates of private schools struggle with their study when joining university since private schools are repeatedly alleged to overvalue students' performance and give them grades more than deserved.

Finally, based on the study findings, IMISU admission counselors should concentrate on the utilization of STEP as a decisive measure in the process of admitting incoming students to the college of languages and translation, IMISU.

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The Interaction of Possible Worlds through the Prism of Cognitive Narratology

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Abstract
The article deals with the analysis of literary narrative where a possible unreal fictional world and a possible real fictional world usually coexist. When the norms of life plausibility are consciously violated, the real and the unreal possible worlds are emphatically opposed. Hence, their certain aspects are depicted in a fantastically exaggerated form. The interaction of possible worlds in a literary narrative destroys the stereotypes of the reader’s perception. It can occur in different planes: structural (a shift of plot elements of the story, transformation, unusual, sharp turns of the borrowed plot, violations of a plotline); fictional (a combination of real and fantastic features in one image); temporal (violations of the chronological flow of time, a shift of time flow); spatial (expansion or contraction of space, magical spatial formations, displacements, deformations). By their nature, the interaction of different possible worlds can be continuous, partial, and fragmentary; resulting from their boundaries may overlap or be violated (entirely or partially). The continuous interaction of different possible worlds, destruction of their borders, although they do not disappear completely, make them largely blurred, interpenetrating each other. In the case of partial interaction of possible worlds, their boundaries intersect. In the case of fragmentary interaction of possible worlds, their common points are slightly visible, for example, only the borrowed title of a literary work or a character’s name, or a fantastic concrete event or a place of the event.

Keywords: cognitive, interaction, narratology, narrator, possible worlds, types

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Introduction

The rapid development of current literary studies in the frame of cognitive narratology is prompted by the ideas of cognitive psychology, which constitutes a separate direction in the researches of cognitive processes, as well as the use of appropriate cognitive procedures and techniques. Having been elucidated in the 1960s in the studies by Bruner (2017) and Neisser (2015), given the advances in cybernetics and electronic modeling of intellect, cognitive psychology focused on how information about the world is retrieved in the human mind, the way this information is represented, and further – the principles according to which it is stored in memory and becomes knowledge, and subsequently – how this knowledge affects our attention and behavior (Solso, 2001). Solso defines the task of cognitive psychology as "both ambitious and exciting" (Solso, 2001, p. 74). It concerns the study of a very complex phenomenon – the nature of human thought. In the space of contemporary literary studies, this task becomes even more ambitious and "exciting" because the projection of human thought on the matrix of a literary narrative opens a significant perspective of reading an academic work and understanding its multiple meanings. A deep, proper cognitive analysis of a complex structure of a literary narrative through definite narrative strategies and representative models of possible worlds within a literary work is perhaps the most benchmark segment of modern narrative theories.

Literature Review

Modern achievements of cognitive narratology are based on the works of Fludernik (2012) (An Introduction to Narratology), Palmer (2008) (Fictional Minds). In Ukrainian literary criticism, the paradigm of cognitive narratology has been developed by Bekhta (2011), Babelyuk (2018), Koliasa (2014; 2015; 2016).

Papusha (2013) emphasizes that "during the last decades, the object of interest in the humanities is gradually changing scholars think about the essence of the narrative, the way of its existence or pragmatics" (Папуша, 2013, p.16), associating this fact with methodological reflections of the "narrative turn." With the help of the cognitive approach, the narratological paradigm can be expanded, deepened, and in the study of a literary narrative in particular. It can also identify and systematize different dialogue markers of or polylogue of consciousness involved in the possible fictional worlds (creation, reception, interpretation, and analysis).

Research Instruments

For the formation of theoretical and methodological foundations of cognitive narratology, the answer to the question: "what is the subject of cognitive narratology: textual structures or structures of human thinking?" is of particular significance (Собчук,2012, p.12). The search for an answer should consider modern cognitive psychology is based on theories and methods of ten main areas of scientific investigation (perception, pattern recognition, attention, memory, imagination, language functions, developmental psychology, thinking, problem-solving, human intelligence, artificial intelligence). According to such a rather broad, instrumental panorama of cognitive narratology is the synthesis rather than the differentiation of these specified classes of structures. The study of the specifics of organization, reception, and interpretation of a literary narrative can offer correct answers about how textual forms (like possible worlds) are transformed into structures of human thinking. And they, in their turn, will identify subsequent or other textual sestems. Thus, attempts to introduce one of the directions of postclassical narratology in the context of cognitive psychology give grounds to determine the main task of
cognitive narratology – to explore the specifics of a literary narrative as a result and source of human thought.

The research was carried out with the involvement of modeling possible worlds, distinguishing the possible fictional world (unreal) and the possible world (real) of a literary narrative. The interaction (continuous, partial, fragmentary) of different unreal fictional worlds and the possible real world within a literary narrative creates their own fictional world, which reflects a grotesque picture of a postmodern contemporary objective reality with violations of life norms, an impossible combination of real and unreal, hyperbolized distortion of objective reality and its confusion with fantasy and real features.

Data Collection Procedures

The concept of the narrator is one of the key categories of narratological discourse. Its essence and specificity have been studied within the structuralist approach, and its nature has been addressed by scholars from the standpoint of phenomenology and receptive poetics. In our previous studies, a theoretical model of the narrator has also been presented, taking into account the achievements of representatives of different narratological approaches (Maцевко-Бекерська, 2008, 2009). In particular, the following typology of narrators has been analyzed in detail, embracing the four fundamental concepts: 1) the heterodiegetic narrator in the extradiegetic situation (according to Schmid's model – the primary non-diegetic narrator); 2) the heterodiegetic narrator in the intradiegetic situation (according to Schmid's model – the secondary non-diegetic narrator); 3) the homodiegetic narrator in the extradiegetic situation (according to Schmid's model – the primary diegetic narrator); 4) the homodiegetic narrator in the intradiegetic situation (according to Schmid's model – the secondary diegetic narrator). This typology registers two main points of support: narration and narrative, in other words, the story itself and the way it is manifested.

The organization of narrated events occurs due to the narrator’s position in the depicted fictional world, his/her involvement in the narrative coordinates, and the speech constructions that provide the literary world with objectivity, expressiveness, and representativeness. Thus, the heterodiegetic narrator in the extradiegetic situation is not a participant of the narrated event but is a factor in the story because he/she is an interlocutor or observer. This type is usually grammatically manifested through the first-person statement. The heterodiegetic narrator in the intradiegetic situation represents a story about which he/she has a wholly detached position; he/she is neither a participant nor a direct observer of the course of the event. The form of this manifestation in the text is the third-person statement. The homodiegetic narrator in the extradiegetic situation represents a story in which he/she is a fictional character and a narrative center. Unfolding the narrative, he/she captures the distancing from specific events and affirms maximum objectivity of presentation. The homodiegetic narrator in the intradiegetic situation, on the contrary, tries to identify his/her history emphatically with the narrative contours of a literary narrative. Hence, in contrast to the previous one, this type emphasizes the emotionality of representation. Thus, the developed typology focuses on the intentional motives of the source of presentation and their grammatical configurations.

To differentiate the forms of organization of a literary narrative, we use the concept of "narrative strategy," i.e., a certain intentional guideline for the integral formatting of aesthetically
significant material, which is receptively determined by a set of individual signs that, firstly, ensure the adequacy of the perception of another's experience, and secondly, are designed to enhance the reader's co-creation at the stage of its appropriation. In the space of a literary narrative, the individual author's strategy is projected on a particular plane of stylistic means (Maцевко-Бекерська, 2008). It is worth stressing that in combination with traditional models of narrative organization with the possibilities of cognitive narratology, previous approaches to narrative can be detailed, as well as new algorithms of poetic and cognitive analysis can be developed.

The heterodiegetic narrator in the extradiegetic situation is often identified with the explicit author of a literary narrative. The synonymy of these concepts is not complete. After all, an explicit author is a "figure in a literary text," who belongs to the world of fiction and leads the story on his/her behalf, i.e., the "fictitious author" of the entire work or its part and is a character in this world (Соврем. заруб. литературовед, 1996, p. 156).

The subjectivity of narration is represented grammatically (1st person) and partly initially, as specific methods of artistic concentration are activated. From the standpoint of cognitive narratology, the prospect of exploring the double projection of narrative strategy opens up. It includes, firstly, the forms by which the maximum subjective presentation of the story takes place. Secondly, how the narrator will be able to keep in view the receptive activity and constantly signal to the reader about his/her presence in the presentation. In this case, the level of subjective immersion of the narrator is heterogeneous, i.e., it can be a clearly and convincingly embodied exact evaluation position, it can be a concise indication of it. The narrator may also sporadically indicate his/her knowledge or presence.

At the same time, the right of receptive decision belongs exclusively to the reader. Since the images of characters are often fragmentary, sketchy, incomplete, all innuendo places should be filled by the reader. This narrator has the attributes of the authorial type, because "the center of orientation for the reader in the "fictional world" of a literary narrative is the judgment, evaluation, and comments of the narrator" (Соврем. заруб. литерат, 1996, p. 15). In the cognitive chain, the narrator has a defining and meaning-modeling role. His/her proposed markers of communicative limitations affect the activity of the reader. Perception takes place in a psychological neighborhood "with those who knows," so the implementation of the reception also has specific coordinates. Thus, for the implementation of this type of narrator, perception through image recognition is predominant.

According to the change in the narrative position, the prefix "hetero" can be feasible for defining yet another technique. Thus, to understand the specifics of the narrative strategy in a literary work, the heterodiegetic narrator in the intradiegetic situation has a very interesting receptive and intentional affirmation. Narrative modeling takes place through a system of unique individual signs, which have the task of organizing the fictional world so that the receptive projection is carried out in complete isolation from the narrative center. The chronotope should unfold in such a way that the reader will decide for himself/herself on the accents of reception, as well as on the directions of interpretation. Within this type of literary narrative, perception is manifested through the activation of attention and imagination.
The author's comment "cares" about provoking the reader's ability to assess what is happening in a literary narrative. It could be done in two ways: "refraining from an unambiguous assessment of events, he/she creates "empty spaces" that allow some options for filling them. And at the same time, by providing an opportunity for evaluation, he/she makes sure, that these places are not filled arbitrarily." (Соврем. заруб. литерат, 1996, p. 131).

The formal distancing of the narrator from the diegetic space and the modeling of the position "outside the diegesis" affects the contours of the narrative strategy. The structure of the presentation is carried out in such a way that the reader does not receive direct and outward instructions from the narrator for self-being in the semantic field. At the same time, the narrator acquires the right to make generalizations, offer certain evaluative judgments, or give more or less detailed comments on the presentation of the narration. The narrative model is denoted by special markers of universal knowledge, and for its detailing, any off-topic elements are acceptable (digressions, comments, descriptions, characteristics).

On the one hand, a literary narrative ensures the integrity of the composition, which is completed due to the psychological effect of distancing the narrator from the depicted story. On the other hand, it is the psychological complexity of the first perception that activates such elements of the cognitive chain as attention and imagination. Finally, the objectivity of the presentation contributes to the maximum subjectivity of reception.

The homodiegetic narrator in the extradiegetic situation is another narrative type who seeks to objectify presentation. Being both a character in the story representing the narrative, he/she is maximally removed from the immediate events. The reader should get the impression that the "story about oneself" is entirely autonomous from the intention of the narrative center. In this context, it is necessary to agree with the reflections of Lotman, who emphasized the characteristic feature of the event in the literary work – it is "the transfer of the character across the boundaries of the semantic field" (Лотман, 1970, p. 282) or "the crossing of the forbidden border" (Лотман, 1970, p. 288). At the same time, for Schmid's typology, the notions of the boundary and essence of eventfulness became central: the limit of eventfulness can be "topographical, pragmatic, ethical, cognitive or psychological" (Шмид, 2003, p. 14). The essence of the event consists "in some deviation from the legal and normative framework of this world, in violation of some rules, compliance with which preserves the order and structure of this world" (Шмид, 2003, p. 14).

From the standpoint of the cognitive approach, it is worth emphasizing the ethical, cognitive, and psychological boundaries of action because the narrator-character marks everything conventional in the fictional space and time, as well as his/her position of "an interested outsider." Hence, the process of perception is derived from the recognition of images pointed to by the narrator, who seems to be "here-not-now" (and therefore, his/her omniscience plays a crucial role in the first reading and subsequent concentration and fixation of memory).

In fact, for a participant of a narrative story, the context "from within" is self-evident, as is the consistent (or not entirely consistent) deployment of the essential elements of the narrative. However, the proven detachment gives the narrator significant opportunities for the formation of evaluative discourse because the position of "not-here-and-not-now" (relative to the moment of
reading and modeling the psychological context of perception) gives the reader the impression of independence in representing the literary world (Pavlenko, 2016).

On the one hand, the approach to meaning is autonomous, and perception is created exclusively by the reader. On the other – a distancing of the source of presentation simulates the context of psychological trust because even the direct participant in the narrative does not interfere in the interpretative process. The homodiegetic narrator provides the fictional world with the subject of the action, the internal contrast of changes that occur with this subject, and the chronological order of the narrative unfolding. Outlining the physical presence of the narrative center in the literary space and time projects the deceptive illusion of the absolute reality of the narrative story adds specificity and persuasiveness to individual events.

The homodiegetic narrator in the intradiegetic situation is another type of narrator, engaging from the point of view of cognitive narratology. Hence, perception acquires maximum subjectivity, as the narrator emphasizes the identity of his/her own and narrative stories. At the same time, he/she is not only convincingly self-presented but also clearly emphasizing this presence by any means giving the presentation of private emotionality. In the cognitive chain, perception begins with the narrator's memory and imagination. It is the center of the presentation and then the vehicle of the receptive process.

Linguistic constructions provide intentional identity since the reader perceives the "I-narration" from the author's voice. Therefore, his/her presence in the narrative specifies the communicative component of reception. For the dynamics of the cognitive process, an important role belongs to any details of narrative, descriptive, psychological plans, all elements of creating a context for further understanding of the meaning of the literary narrative. The emotionality of the narrator is entirely situational. It sometimes decisively influences the receptive activity, in which the first impression acquires the scale of reasoning, reflection, and analysis. For the reader, there is a place of active observation and "immersion" in the psychological state of the narrator. The reader becomes part not so much of the reception as of its evaluation. The flexibility of creating this type of narrative implies the flexibility of perception and understanding.

The configuration of the narrative story is directly related to the intention of the biographical author. The ontological paradigm of a literary world is determined by the worldview, ethical, and aesthetic, personal values of the author. That is why this type of narrative strategy is rightly classified as the autobiographical narrative (Schmid: "autobiographical narrator" (Шмид, 2003).

The researcher singles out one of the representative feature: "the classic autobiographical narrative provides a large temporal distance between the "I," about which is narrated, and the "I," which narrates, and they are related by the psychophysical identity" (Шмид, 2003, p. 93).

Psychological identity is also essential for the reception because the reader has to enter the "foreign" space and time, emotionally appropriate it, and grasp the meaning of the presented story (Babelyuk, 2018). "Stylization" of one's own story helps to model a convincing and well-argued narrative (Шмид, 2003). At the reader's level, the "remodeling" of the intradiegetic
presentation into the extradiegetic one will gradually occur. The author must limit himself/ herself because the narrator is a narrative center. The narrator, in turn, must hide the fragments of the narrative, leaving receptive gaps in both the events and their psychological experience.

The physical inseparability of two narrative entities – "I" in the story and "I" in the presentation of the story – requires considerable cognitive effort on the part of the reader, just as distinguishing stylization techniques from the direct deployment of the narrative. Thus, reading occurs in conditions of some psychological discomfort, which "grows" from the interval between the story and the narrative. The narrator should keep in view fragments or episodes of the represented story, as well as outline, probably, a different perception, understanding, and comprehension of this story. Objective "otherness" is due to natural processes that occur in the character of a person over time. Thus, the homodiegetic narration simultaneously reproduces the course of the story, the change of events, and the present self-commentary of the narrative itself.

Thus, the formation of the narrator's typology through the prism of cognitive modeling makes it possible to expand the poetic horizons of literary studies, to introduce into the terminological field the concepts of "textual structures" and "structures of human thinking" to identify specific patterns of their mutual transformation.

Discussion
Within the theory of narrative semantics, a typology of possible worlds of Doležel (2000) was developed, which is based on four types of modal systems that express an assessment or particular attitude to the events, and state of affairs, depicted in a literary narrative. The following types of possible worlds of a literary narrative have been distinguished: fictional worlds representing real historical events (historical novels, chronicles); fictional worlds that do not violate the physical laws of the real world (entertainment literature, fiction, short stories, novels); fictional worlds, which are a kind of bridge between what may or may not happen in the real world (science fiction); fantastic worlds, that can never be a reality (fairy tales, legends, magical realism, works of postmodernism). All the above classifications of possible worlds can be united by one principle – the correlation of the world created by a literary narrative with objective reality.

The concept of possible worlds allowed us interpreting textual semantics as a mental representation of reality (Dolezeel 2000), Semino (1997). Hence, the world of literary narrative scholars began to understand a specific context, scenario, and the type of reality that comes to mind when reading a literary narrative and correlates with objective reality. With this regard, the world of a literary narrative can be treated as a heterogeneous formation, which unusually combines the possible unreal fictional worlds and the possible real-world, where the norms of life plausibility are consciously violated. Their interrelation emphasizes the real and unreal in a literary narrative, as well as certain aspects of the depicted fantastic hyperreality. These fictional possible worlds are ambivalent because they lack a stable value emphasis and therefore involve "contradictory readings" or "re-readings," constituting cultural versions of "different fictional possible worlds."
Findings

The main question of interworld relations of any possible unreal fictional world is its status to the possible real world. As a result of the continuous interaction of these possible worlds, which by its nature may be continuous, partial, and fragmentary, their boundaries can be more or less violated. Although their boundaries do not disappear completely, as they are primarily blurred, interpenetrating each other. In such literary narratives, the elements of possible worlds operate in one space, interacting in it. The narrator in this type of interaction tries to control all flow of events, giving judgments and intruding in the development of events. Usually, a story is presented from the first type of narration. The characteristic feature is the periodic address of the narrator to the characters of a story, interference in their lives. At the same time, while the effect of the reader’s presence seems to be leveled and forgotten. The position of the reader changes: he looks at everything with the eyes of the character, empathizes with him, the events described by the personified author-narrator as if from the inside. The personified author-narrator is often used in autobiographical and confessional narratives. The example of this interaction can be illustrated in Haggins' story "Cinderella and the Bowling Slipper" (Коляса, 2016).

The analyzed story begins as an ordinary fairy tale with an introductory sentence, “Once upon a time.” After these words, the reader expects the usual fictional continuation of the story, such as “in a faraway country,” but here, the reader’s stereotypes have been ruined as he meets the opposite: “in a land not far away at all.” From the very beginning, the reader gets acquainted with the main characters – two third-grader girls, Fiona and Frieda, who are fond of fairy tales and loved to play games with changing clothes.

The penetration of fairy-tale characters from the possible unreal fictional world into the possible real world of a literary narrative begins when the girls, playing their usual game, read the spell. Cinderella first appeared in her sullen, casual clothes, but she still looked great. Following her, Cinderella's half-sisters, who tried to prevent her from getting to the ball, also enter the possible real-world of this literary narrative.

As in the famous fairy tale, only the Fairy could help solve all the problems of possible world penetration. She could be found with the help of a business card (as one of the attributes of the possible real-world), which the Fairy left to Cinderella, according to which she lived in the real world and had a physical address.

Cinderella’s Godmother turned out to be the girl's neighbor, considered a freak by everyone. Cinderella also changes her dirty clothes to get to the ball, but in this story, she also changes her appearance with the help of girls Fiona and Frida. They change her into the uniform and bowling shoes: “Cinderella looked like a wonderfully ordinary member of Sprinkledust Bowling Club.” (Haggins, 2009, p. 74).

The transformations that took place with Cinderella in a possible unreal fictional world are somewhat different than those that happen to her in a possible real-world story. For example, singing a children's song, “Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream…,” is not a magic spell: Godmother turned into a red bowling ball into a carriage. The bowling ball was turned into a red, pearly-swirly fairy-tale coach; the guy from the bowling club – the coachman; the guy
behind the shoe rentals desk was now sitting on the couch holding the horse’s reigns; children, who played video games – in the horses.

In the process of these possible worlds’ interactions, the Godmother's warning from the possible unreal fictional world was also preserved – Cinderella had to return from the ball by midnight. She should be helped in this by one of the modern devices (an attribute of a possible real-world) – a digital watch programmed for 11:55, which should give a signal without five minutes to twelve. But realizing that this device will only harm Cinderella because of it, she will not lose her shoe: “No glass slipper on the stairs, with which the prince will be able to find her. No way for the prince to ever, ever find her” (Haggins, 2008, p. 78).

The characters had to get to the ball, located in the penthouse of the same high-rise building where the girls and the Godmother lived.

Many fairy-tale inhabitants of the possible unreal fictional world came to this party – princesses, princes, witches, queens, kings, gnomes, wolves, and all the fairies, every princess, prince, witch, queen, king, dwarf, wolf, and fairy that had ever read. And even more famous – “Snow White was sipping orange juice with her ruby red lips,” “Rapunzel had her hair in a bun the size of a beach ball,” “Prince what-his-name from Sleeping Beauty was pacing nearby,” whose names serve as intertextual elements of different kinds, that remind the reader the other possible literary narratives and as textual markers of a total word-play, which involve the reader into the chaos of fictional characters.

It is interesting to say that the end of the analyzed story is happy and coincides with the happy ending of the original tale about Cinderella. But in that transformed fictional world, the prince did not find Cinderella with a crystal shoe. Not having time to hide from the prince, she is located in a bowling alley. The prince immediately recognizes her and later proposes to her.

In the case of partial interaction of the possible worlds, their boundaries intersect and therefore are violated. In the analyzed story by Block (2009), "Snow," it is observed the interaction of two fictional worlds: the possible unreal fictional world and the possible real-world, in which boundaries partially interact. This type of narrator does not belong to the protagonists of a literary work and does not participate in the action described but only observes it. It demonstrates the omniscient and ubiquitous type of narrator. The author-narrator in the form of "he" can lead the story objectively, limited to comments, and can express his "I" in the direct author's appeals to the reader.

The possible unreal fictional world includes partially borrowed characters (Snow White), who in the possible real-world of a literary narrative is called Snow, as her seven brothers call her. She has the same white skin, but the whiteness of the skin is metaphorically compared not to snow but to frost: "frost-colored.” Her red lips and black hair are not mentioned, but her black eyes are compared to the petals of a black rose. By the way, gnomes in this story are seven ugly men, strange and deformed (suddenly, he saw them as deformed).

Borrowed elements from the possible unreal fictional world include the residence of the main character and men – the house. But this is not a tiny wooden house in the woods, as in the
original tale, but on the side in the canyon. Besides, in the story "Snow," – a bizarre house was built, without a single cut tree, without chopping down one tree. It had towers and intricate passages and stairs, “an odd-shaped house with towers and twisting hallways and jagged staircases.”

The analyzed fictional world of the story is represented by separate plot events: Snow lived with seven men Bear, Fox, Tiger, Buck, Otter, Lynx, and Ram (in the original tale, the gnomes did not have their names), but not in adulthood, from her birth, she was brought by the gardener and lived until she was poisoned, and was in a borderline state between death and sleep: “They found her lying on the floor with the poison in her veins... she had a pulse, but hardly – very shallow”; seven brothers in this terrible condition laid her in a glass bed, not in the coffin in which she slept: “They carried her upstairs to the glass bed they had made for her when she outgrew the cradle.” She was animated with a kiss by the gardener, who brought her to the seven brothers, not the prince, when he touched her with his mouth, and her eyes opened.

The elements of a possible real-world narrative are that a girl is not born by a queen, who lives in a magical kingdom in her castle, but by an ordinary young woman, without a name, without any title. She does not die after the birth of a child, as in the famous tale of Grimm Brothers, but does not know what to do with the baby because the child is constantly crying: “She screamed and screamed – the child.” As an example of bitter irony, the mother does not have time to give the child's name, and in despair, she provides the child to a gardener. Besides, no one pursues Snow because of her beauty and does not condemn her to death; the gardener himself carries her to seven men, who live not in the woods but a house in the canyon.

The girl grew up with her brothers, but as she grew up, the gardener visited her. Her mother, who lived with the gardener, tracked them down: “Snow’s mother followed the gardener into the canyon one night” and, out of jealousy, decided to poison Snow with apples: “came back with the apples injected with poison.”

After waking up, Snow does not fall in love with her savior, but wanted to see her brothers more than a gardener or a mother than anything in the world: “She wanted them the way she needed the earth and the flowers and the sky and the sea from her tower room and food and sleep and warmth and light and nights by the fire and poetry and the stories of going out into the world and almost being destroyed by it and returning to find comfort and the real meaning of freak.”

The fragmentary interaction of possible worlds is presented by their interaction. It can be traced only with the borrowed title of a literary work, or the character’s name, or a separate fantastic event or place. Reading the literary narratives with a fragmentary interaction of possible fictional worlds, it is not possible to trace this interaction immediately and establish where precisely this point of contact is. Such possible worlds (possible unreal fictional world and a possible real-world of a literary narrative) exist separately. Only some passages lead the reader to think that this is a repetition of a famous literary work only in a distorted version (Коляса, 2014). The narrator in this type of interaction is invisible. The reader himself has to make the summaries and judgments.
Reading the story by Lee (2019) "Wolf," the possible real-world of a literary narrative is presented, where the story is told by a teenage girl, speaking of a quarrel and a fight between her parents, accusing her stepfather of constantly drinking and beating her mother. During the story, the girl kindly calls her mother “my mom” and stepfather only “he.” The girl overhears the quarrel and realizes that she was exposed for what she suffered and hid in complete secrecy for many years – her stepfather's violence against her. She knew that her mother would not leave it and run away.

From the very beginning to the very end, it is difficult for the reader to relate it’s title to its content. The title of the story, "Wolf," is just the first clue to the reader’s guess. When the reader begins to unravel the quest, correlating the plot of Charles Perrault's famous fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood," which is an element of a possible unreal fictional world, where the granddaughter goes to her grandmother, in the possible real world of a literary narrative goes by bus, to the desert, not to the desert forests, running away from problems and the stepfather, instead of visiting the sick grandmother with treats. Arriving at the place, to her grandmother's house, we meet an unusual grandmother, a modern one, with a bandana and jeans. Her house was not so cozy, but a second-hand shop.

Finally, everything is set to clear, the wolf in the story – a stepfather, is already ahead of the girl and quarrels with his grandmother, who already has a weapon in her hands. In the quarrel, the girl said that he raped her for years and dreamed of killing him. It interesting to notice that the ending of the story coincides with the original fairy tale – the criminal dies, but at the hands of her granddaughter: “I had the gun, and I pulled the trigger.” But in the possible real-world of this literary narrative, as in the real world, you have to be responsible for one’s deeds, even if you kill a criminal. The grandmother took the blame not to break the life of her young granddaughter.

Conclusion

Thus, the existence of several possible worlds (possible unreal fictional world and possible real world) in one literary narrative and their interaction destroys the stereotypes of the reader’s perception that occur at the textual level (shift of plot constituents, plot transformation, unusual, sharp turns of the borrowed plot, violation of a plotline), in the area of images (combination in one image of real and fantastic features) and temporal (violation of the chronological flow of time, a shift of time flow), spatial (shift of spatial planes, expansion or contraction of space, magical spatial formations, displacements, deformations).

By their nature, the interaction of different possible worlds can be continuous, partial, and fragmentary; resulting from their boundaries may overlap or be violated (entirely or partially). The continuous interaction of different possible worlds, destruction of their borders, although they do not disappear completely, make them largely blurred, interpenetrating each other. In the case of partial interaction of possible worlds, their borders intersect. In the case of fragmentary interaction of possible worlds, their common points are slightly visible, for example, only the borrowed title of a literary work or a character’s name, or a fantastic concrete event or a place of the event.
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Service-learning in English as a Second Language Teacher Training Program: Exploring Pre-service Teachers’ Authentic Learning Experiences

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Abstract
As the world we live in has become more digitalized, challenges are occurring left and right, especially in the education field. In gaining quality teachers, there is a need to train future educators to have the ability to adapt to the ever-changing technology and global changes. However, pre-service teachers often seem unprepared and unable to adapt to changes. Hence, implementing service-learning in the teacher training program is vital as it provides the opportunity to engage and experience 21st-century real classroom lessons. Service-learning has also been proven to be an effective approach in training pre-service teachers. This paper aims to investigate the perceptions of pre-service teachers toward service-learning in terms of authentic learning experiences. It highlights how the implementation of service-learning approach in learning to teach writing in a second language context facilitates pre-service teachers in terms of authentic experience. A qualitative method was conducted to investigate the authentic learning experiences among 54 pre-service teachers in a public university in Malaysia. Data were collected through open-ended questions. Based on this study, the findings showed that the pre-service teachers could experience the real-life environment of teaching and learning and applying educational theories learned. They were also able to obtain hands-on experience in interacting with the students and marking their sample essays. It is hoped that future teachers and educational organizations can benefit from understanding the benefits of service-learning in teacher training programs. Future researchers could investigate the challenges of service-learning in teacher training programs.

Keywords: English as a second language, authentic learning experience, digital knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pre-service teachers, teachers training, service-learning

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Introduction

Having quality education is a demand all over the world. It is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals stated by the United Nations to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote a more lifelong opportunity for everyone. To achieve this goal, teachers play one of the most critical roles. As the world is continuously changing, and the students are becoming more digital natives, teachers need to be flexible in adapting to future global changes and the ever-changing technological wave. According to the World Economic Forum Education 4.0 Framework (2020), having technological skills is a must as we move deeper into the era of 4IR. This includes the content based on developing digital skills, including programming, digital responsibility, and the use of technology.

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) highlighted that globalized online learning would be one of the primary educational shifts. Teachers are required to maximize the use of technology to ensure high-quality education (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2013). This actively demonstrates that; teachers will need to be capable of handling technology to ensure that lessons can be aligned with the current and future generations of digital natives and the era of 4IR.

Due to the constant demands from parents and students on quality education (Mitchell, Hirn & Lewis, 2017), educators are facing incomparable challenges in adapting new teaching methods to adapt to current generation students who are digital natives (Hashim, 2018), and they need to keep up to the learners’ interest (Samat, Hashim & Yunus, 2019). Hence, being an effective teacher is crucial in this ever-changing era. Yazan (2019) stated that understanding all the problems and challenges one will face is crucial for future teachers. As education is becoming more and more significant in everyone’s lives, teachers play a greater role in ensuring that all students can get equal opportunity and knowledge.

Having quality teachers in order to strive for quality education is giving significant responsibilities to teacher training programs. Training teachers require significant effort to ensure quality teachers. Yunus, Hashim, Ishak, and Mahamod (2010) highlighted that most pre-service teachers are still seem not ready to face challenges in a classroom despite innumerable ways and implementation conducted in training future teachers. A Malaysian-based study conducted by Goh and Matthews (2011) addressed that pre-service teachers often face difficulties and cannot respond to circumstances during practicum teaching. This is due to the lack of practice and the different situations that were given on campus-based learning.

Thus, the pre-service teachers must be given prior exposure even before going for practicum teaching. Implementing service-learning can ensure preparedness among pre-service teachers, and it is vital to support the critical social values and educational practices among trainee teachers (Carrington, Mercer, Lyer & Selva, 2015). Service-learning was primarily conducted by higher education and led by academics in the west (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, 2000; Butin, 2003) which then influenced other universities around the globe (Yusof, Tengku Ariffin, Awang-Hashim, Nording, & Kaur, 2020). In Malaysia, the current blueprint included service-learning as a practical approach in enhancing teacher education at the tertiary level (Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE), 2015). Service-learning should be
implemented in a more structured and systematic manner into the academic program (Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE), 2015). This is due to the potential that service-learning can influence pre-service teachers’ commitment, understanding of the pedagogy, and sensitivity towards students’ differences (Ashton & Arlington, 2019).

Service-learning is one of the most innovative teaching methodologies that allows service with academic study to strengthen communities (Scott & Graham, 2015); plus, it is also a growing pedagogy implemented in higher institutions and teacher education (Mergler et al., 2017). Other than that, through the implementation of service-learning projects in teacher training programs, pre-service teachers will be able to engage in hands-on experience working with students and utilizing technologies in their lessons (Song, 2018). However, there is still a gap in discussing the effectiveness of service-learning in teachers’ training programs, particularly in authentic experiences gained by pre-service teachers, which include exposure to the real-life environment of teaching and learning, hands-on experience in interacting with the students and, applying digital and pedagogical knowledge as well as theories in a real classroom environment.

Mastering all the skills in the English language is crucial for all English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and learners. Teaching and learning the second language can be considered as a complicated process that can also contribute to feelings of fear and anxiousness (Toh & Rahmat, 2021). Particularly in writing, ESL learners often find it challenging to master. Some of the challenges are poor grammar, lack of vocabulary, and even poor spelling (Moses & Mohamad, 2019). It is pivotal that teachers should be well equipped with suitable teaching approaches and identify ways to motivate the students to ensure that the students can master the skill (Abrar, 2016). In order to effectively produce quality teachers, particularly ESL pre-service teachers, service-learning should be integrated into teacher training programs.

Implementing service-learning in the teacher training programs is more than suitable as studies have shown that service-learning can help both teachers and students engage in authentic dialogue, gain confidence and develop skills relevant to the targeted language (Bippus & Eslami, 2013; Garver, Eslami & Tong, 2018). It is crucial to note that service-learning has been associated with countless benefits, such as increasing students’ learning and providing authentic experience (Salam, Awang Iskandar, Ibrahim & Farooq, 2019). This study can significantly provide ideas on how can service-learning be implemented in courses and offers the pre-service teachers’ perceptions on its effectiveness particularly in an ESL context. The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the perceptions of pre-service teachers toward service-learning in terms of authentic experiences.

The main objective of this study is to investigate Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) pre-service teachers’ perceptions towards service-learning approach in terms of authentic experience and highlights the question of how can service-learning approach in learning to teach writing in an ESL context facilitate pre-service teachers in terms of authentic experience. This study also discussed mainly on the framework Cone of Experience. Cone of Experience expresses characterizing learners realistically and observing their experience (Davis & Summers, 2015). Edger Dale’s Cone of Experience (Figure one)
employs a positive influence on students and develops their leadership skills. Cone of Experience also explains the process of gaining experience from learning state to performing what they have learned.

**Literature Review**

**Cone of Experience**

The Cone of Experience was introduced in 1946 by Edgar Dale. The theory (shown in Figure 1) focuses on the progression of the experiences. The cone goes from concrete (bottom of the cone) to the most abstract (top of the cone) (Davis & Summers, 2015). According to Davis and Summers, these levels are known for learners to be 'doing.' The middle cone is said to 'observe' the experience. The top two levels are different from the one at the bottom, where students do not interact directly with the phenomena such as demonstrations, field trips, and even learning in lecture halls (Davis & Summers 2015). The further down one goes in the progress, the more information received. According to Masters (2013), the bottom level is where one would 'do the real thing' (p.4). Dale describes the value as 'direct, firsthand, experiences in which becomes the foundation of our learning' (as cited in Masters, 2013). Effective learning environments should be filled with rich and memorable experiences where students can see, hear, taste, touch, and try (Lee, 2016). The service-learning approach is known for its direct approach and hands-on experiences (Coffey & Lavery, 2015), aligning with the framework.

![Cone of Experience Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.** Dale’s cone of experience by Davis and Summers (2015, P. 2)

Based on the Cone of Experience, it is significant that the pre-service teachers should be given all the knowledge necessary before venturing into a professional teaching profession. The Cone of Experience addresses the importance of learning and experiencing. The model also suggests a more enriching learning experience where the students would get the first-hand experience in conducting the activities themselves (Seels, 1997; Ogunleye, 2019). Service-learning approach is the perfect example for allowing students to apply what they have learned in lectures to a real-life environment. There are countless benefits that service-learning brings. Based on literature reviews, the researcher mapped out four main effectiveness of service-learning: authentic experiences, understanding of the course content, active participation, and engagement and problem-learning. The elements are then illustrated in a conceptual framework. Further explanations of the conceptual framework are detailed in the next section.

**Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework was modified to understand in-depth the effectiveness of service-
learning and pre-service teachers' perceptions towards service-learning in teacher training programs. Based on reviews, a total of four main elements were mapped out which are authentic experiences (Grim, 2010; Soslau & Yost, 2007), understanding of the course content (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Bandy, 2016), active participation, and engagement (Sedlak, Doheny, Panthofer & Anaya, 2003; Said, Ahmad & Nor, 2019), and problem-based learning (Tawfik & Trueman & Lorz, 2014; Arnold, 2019). This study aims to investigate one of the elements in the framework, which is the perceptions of pre-service teachers on service-learning concerning authentic experiences. Despite countless studies conducted on service-learning, there are still very few done to study how the pre-service teachers perceived service-learning as part of teachers' training, particularly in authentic experiences gained. Figure two illustrates the conceptual framework.

Figure 2: Service-Learning Conceptual Framework
Figure two shows the four elements studied and how it connects with service-learning. All the centralized elements are among the benefits gained from service-learning. Service-learning is one of the most effective methods in exposing pre-service teachers to classroom challenges. Service-learning provides authentic experiences and practices in which students may not be able to get anywhere else (Coffey & Lavery, 2015). Further explanation on service-learning and authentic experiences are further explained in the next section.

Service-learning Approach as a Platform for Teachers’ Training
Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005) stated that service-learning could be broadly defined as a teaching strategy or method where the students can learn critical curricular objectives by providing service to a community and understand their needs, particularly in education. This
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Practice is considered to be a versatile and diverse approach to implement in a broad range of educational settings, where educators aim for students to have meaningful and confrontational learning experiences (Mergler et al., 2017). Characteristically, the cycle in service-learning includes student planning, action, reflection, and celebration. In high-quality service-learning projects, students would have to voice out in determining activities, and the teachers will facilitate knowledge and skill acquisition (Billig et al., 2005). Pre-service teachers can contribute to the community and share their knowledge through service-learning programs. Traditional teaching methods, such as lecturing in large halls, are said to have lost students’ interests and attention (Luo, Murray & Crompton, 2020).

Service-learning has since developed a pedagogical approach in higher education, particularly colleges and universities and internationally, for more than a few decades (Bennet, Sunderland, Bartleet, & Power, 2016). Service-learning connects theory and practice which allows students to practice what they have learnt and organize activities based on the community needs (Resch & Schritters, 2019). Bennet et al. (2016) continued by stating that many institutions have struggled and almost achieved the impossible in instilling a sense of “service to the community” in courses to educate their students. Many programs require students to complete community service for specific hours to complete their graduation requirements. Often pre-service teachers would volunteer their time in schools to expand their learning and to gain teaching experience. In contrast to the act of volunteerism where citizens are called to serve others (Gaines-Hanks & Grayman-Simpson, 2011), and service-learning is viewed as equal that includes preparation for experiential learning where pre-service teachers can make meaningful contributions to the society (Pratt & Danylyuk, 2017). Researchers believed that service-learning could result in a deeper understanding of concepts and heightened urgency to learn (Hullender, Hinck, Wood-Nartker, Burton, & Bowlby, 2015). For example, Resch and Schritters (2021) suggest that service-learning promotes in depth understanding on the contents learnt and enhanced the sense of engagement. Due to the multiple positive effects that service-learning offers, researchers have also said that service-learning can reduce high-risk activities and social problems, such as drug abuse and anti-social problems (Mamati et al., 2018).

Training pre-service or beginner teachers is essential to ensure that they are ready to teach in the real world. Universities and colleges conduct numerous teachers’ training programs to ensure students’ full understanding and practices before teaching in real-life. Among the teachers’ training programs are field trips, exhibitions, and even learning in lecture halls (Barnes, 2016). The service-learning approach has become one of the prominent presences among higher education institutions as it focuses on the impact of service-learning on the development of the college participants as contributing citizens of their community (Hildenbrand & Schultz, 2015). Although service-learning has been proven to be a unique approach in exposing pre-service teachers to future challenges, there are very few researchers conducted in an ESL context. Swacha (2018) argues that there is still a gap that addresses ways to implement service-learning in ESL teacher training programs effectively. This can lead to difficulties for curriculum developers and teacher educators to figure out ways to successfully integrate service-learning in their courses. Chiva-Bartoll, Capella-Peris, and Salvador-García (2020) argued that service-learning-related works were also very technical rather than critical and reflective. It is pivotal that critical thinking should be implemented in
service-learning and applied by the students as many university students tend to be lacking stated skill (Abrami, Bernard, Borokhovski, Waddington, Wade & Persson, 2015). It is imperative that service-learning should be conducted to enhance the students’ critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to ensure preparedness to teach in schools.

Other than that, previous studies conducted on service-learning implementation were also more towards one-off application and not for one whole semester. For example, service-learning approach in a study by Shek, Yang, Ma, and Chai (2021) was conducted for 15 hours with secondary school students, and the services were provided by university students in Hong Kong. A study by Damons and Dunbar-Krige (2020) was conducted for three days during the April holidays. In this study, however, the service-learning was conducted for one whole semester with ESL pre-service teachers. Further explanation will be detailed in the methodology section.

**Authentic Experiences in Service-learning**

Authentic learning is referred to as life learning. Service-learning is a pedagogical approach that allows students to integrate the knowledge they have learned and apply it to serve the community (Winn, 2018). According to Hasnine, Ogata, Akcapinar, and Mouri (2019), authentic learning allows students to create concrete and useful materials for them to use and share. The importance of offering pre-service teachers’ new ideas will challenge their critical thinking and engage them in solving problems (Ashton & Arlington, 2019). The service-learning experience provides adventure and outdoor activities through a field trip experience (Tice & Nelson, 2008). For example, a study by Tour (2017) found that teachers enjoy practicing meaningful and independent learning (as cited in Kearney & Maher, 2019). Service-learning provides authentic relationships between communities, and we must implement it in higher institutions to expose the students to the possible challenges and complications (Clifford, 2017).

While this learning can be conducted in multiple ways, it is utterly significant for the pre-service teachers to understand the value of providing service and reflect in their attitudes and behavior and contribute to society through good citizenship and ethical practice (DeNobile, 2019). According to Hildenbrand and Schultz (2015), service-learning has become more relevant in teacher education as it provides an opportunity for pre-service teachers to participate and engage in life experiences rather than their own. In the current application of the principle, embedding service-learning can introduce active participation and exposure to real-world challenges (Lancaster & Bain, 2019).

Prior exposure is significant as it can evolve pre-service teachers’ soft skills. The knowledge and learning in service-learning will be able to connect students and teachers. Mitchell (2008) asserted that through providing their service, pre-service teachers would become active learners, bringing skills and information from community work and integrating theories learned and curriculum of the classroom to produce novel knowledge. By engaging the pre-service teachers in authentic learning outside their standard lecture classroom, pre-service teachers will be able to experience the repertoire of academic learning and develop sophisticated beliefs related to pedagogy for various contexts and diverse learners (Ryan & Healy, 2009). Not only that, pre-service teachers can observe and endorse...
theories such as theories of communication, language, and learning and apply them in the real world, particularly in the classroom. Daniel and Mishra (2017) highlighted that service-learning helps by situating pre-service teachers around real-life classroom challenges and benefits in receiving authentic experience.

In implementing service-learning, higher institutions can benefit from enhancing coursework with real applications and hands-on experience. The local community can also benefit in energizing young people of the community (Onal, Nadler, & O’Loughlin, 2017). Real-life and authentic experiences can offer challenging tasks that promote much more active learning for pre-service teachers (Hero & Lindfors, 2019). To be able to explore opportunities in an authentic experience, the pre-service teacher should be able to communicate effectively with their students (Whistance, 2018). In other words, participation in the authentic activity of the community can build relationships and knowledge, which can lead to learning (Cleland & Durning, 2019).

Additionally, pre-service teachers need to have the opportunity to implement what they have learned through books and in-class activities with actual students. Service-learning allows pre-service teachers to apply their pedagogical and content knowledge with a community and understand their needs in learning (Pittman, Garfield & Piper, 2020). In a service-learning environment, pre-service teachers can guide students in small groups in overcoming their complications and create a variety of solutions, encouraging and at the same time strengthening critical thinking (Siew, Amir & Chong., 2015). The current wave of technology is forcing teachers to infuse their teaching with technology to attract millennials (Bowser et al., 2014; Hashim et al., 2016; Wan Azli, Shah & Mohamad, 2018). Hence, the main objectives in teachers’ education are to ensure that the pre-service teachers are well prepared to align with the digital progress (Rusli, Hashim, Yunus, Zakaria & Norman, 2019).

Embedding service-learning in the coursework can undoubtedly improve pre-service teachers’ soft skills such as problem-solving, leadership, and communication skills. Service-learning also allows pre-service teachers to apply theory into practice and understand the complexities of real-life problems, thereby preparing them to be future leaders (Onal et al., 2017). Theories learned in lectures give extra knowledge and information on education in general, but they can also be applied in the classroom to manage the students and classroom environment (Lasker, 2019). A study conducted by Lenkauskaitė (2020) proved that service learning promotes real situations and circumstances that possibly can happen in a classroom situation. This can ensure pre-service teachers to be more open towards future challenges.

Besides, implementing service-learning can encourage pre-service teachers to integrate the content learned in lectures into real-life classrooms, such as videos, photovoice, quilting, and digital storytelling (Vecchio, Dhillon & Ulmer, 2017). Implementing technology in teachers training program courses helped improve pre-service teachers’ confidence in using technology (Kay, 2006). However, what is often lacking is applying their technical skills in a real classroom environment (Song, 2018). Thus, integrating service-learning projects in teachers training programs would just give a chance for pre-service teachers to take their skills to practice and have confidence in it.
Methodology
Design
This study employed a qualitative method. A qualitative research strategy was conducted in an open-ended question to understand the pre-service teachers’ perceptions towards service learning in terms of authentic experiences. The question was distributed as part of their final exam question. Interviews, as well as observation, were also conducted during the event. The data then analyzed using thematic analysis.

Instrument
This study employed an open-ended question, face-to-face interview, and observation. An open-ended questionnaire allows the participants to respond freely to the inquiry (Geer, 1988). It also allows the individuals to provide their opinions and respond spontaneously (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec & Vehovar, 2003). Both interviews and observation were conducted to understand the pre-service teachers’ perspective on service-learning. Adhabi and Anozie (2017) suggest that interview is one of the most effective ways in conducting qualitative method research as it provides a more detailed analysis. The question was distributed to 56 undergraduate students at a public university in Malaysia.

Participants
The participants in this study were undergraduate students who were doing Bachelor in TESL program and were taking a course named Teaching of Writing in an ESL Context. A total of 56 students were involved in this study. To complete the coursework, the students had to conduct service teaching for a group of underprivileged students in Pahang, Malaysia. The duration of the program was for one semester in which they were required to go through the service-learning program and mentor the students. They were also required to teach and mentor the students of AMG. The participants for the interview were chosen voluntarily.

Procedure of Data Analysis
The data for this study were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis was performed using the four stages proposed by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), which generate natural units of meaning; labeling, categorizing, and ordering the natural units; constructing narratives; and interpretation. The data were later themed based on the participants’ responses.

Procedure of Data Collection
In this study, a qualitative method was conducted. The participants were given an open-ended question to answer as part of their final exam question. Observation and interviews were also conducted to achieve in depth understanding of the service-learning concept. There are a few steps for the researcher to obtain the data. The steps are illustrated below.
The service-learning method in this study was conducted throughout the semester and started at the beginning of the semester. The pre-service teachers were given a task to mentor underprivileged students in the state of Pahang, Malaysia. The pre-service teachers were taught and briefed on teaching pedagogy and the marking schemes before teaching the students. The students were divided into groups of two to four, and each group was given one teacher as their facilitator.

The pre-service teachers were given the students’ essays to analyze and understand their problems in writing. Service-learning phase one began through a communication application, WhatsApp, where the pre-service teachers communicated with the students to recognize more on the students’ complications in writing and their way of learning. The students were mainly poor to moderate proficiency students. The face-to-face meeting happened in phase two of service-learning. The pre-service teachers came up with suitable teaching methods to suit the students’ learning styles and tackle their complications in English writing. The session was conducted for one whole day in Pahang. A qualitative research strategy was conducted in an open-ended question to understand the pre-service teachers’ perceptions of service-learning in authentic experiences. The question was distributed as part of their final exam question.

**Findings**

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the TESL pre-service teachers’ perceptions towards service-learning in terms of authentic experiences. A total of 56 TESL
pre-service teachers were involved in this study. The pre-service teachers were asked based on their perspectives on how can service-learning approach in learning to teach writing in an ESL context facilitates pre-service teachers in terms of authentic experiences. A fully qualitative method was conducted, and open-ended questionnaire were given to the pre-service teachers to explore their perceptions. Both interviews and observation were also conducted during the event. Table one presents the findings.

Table 1: TESL Pre-service teachers’ perceptions towards service-learning in terms of authentic experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Exemplary Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can service-learning approach in learning to teach writing in an ESL context facilitate pre-service teachers in terms of authentic experiences</td>
<td>Exposure to Real Life Environment of Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Pre-service teachers are being exposed to possible problems and consequences that occur during service-learning…….(p4) We were given the students’ essay to identify the student’s strengths and weaknesses and provide better solutions to the students (P16) We were required to develop our own teaching materials…… (P8) Service-learning provides authentic experience in a way that it prepares the teachers for the unexpected students’ behavior…….(P32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on Experience in Interacting with the Students</td>
<td>I was able to use Facebook as a medium to teach writing in ESL….(P50)</td>
<td>Games such as Quizizz, Kahoot were implemented in teaching to attract the students’ attention……(P38) ….I was able to correct their essays. I also gave them some English exercises to be done….(P23) The pre-service teachers had the opportunity to use board games with the students to attract their attention and improve their grammar (P33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying Digital and Pedagogical Knowledge and Theories in a Real Classroom Environment</td>
<td>I was able to use the theories that we learned in class in real life……(P12)</td>
<td>Instagram is a very modern approach and every student seems to have an Instagram account…. (P9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P = Participants

As shown in Table one, the pre-service teachers were able to gain authentic experiences from service-learning. Service-learning provided exposure to real-life teaching and learning environment. The pre-service teachers managed to identify the students’ strengths and
weaknesses and provide solutions to cater to their learning styles. Service-learning also offered hands-on experience in interacting with the students. Conducting activities, teaching and even correcting the students’ mistakes were among the experiences gained through service-learning. Other than that, service learning allows the pre-service teachers to apply the knowledge learned in lectures to a real classroom environment. The implementation of Instagram and Facebook were often used to suit the students’ learning needs as they are more familiar with those applications. They were also able to apply the theories learned in real life. Further discussion is detailed in the next section.

Discussion

Exposure to Real Life Environment of Teaching and Learning

Based on the answers, it can be seen that service-learning provides numerous experiences, and one of it would be that it provides a real-life environment of teaching and learning towards pre-service teachers. A real-life environment is not a familiar atmosphere that pre-service teachers can get anywhere, and it differs from what they might have expected. According to respondent four, she mentioned that they were able to experience how the teaching and learning process works and how to manage the classroom. It was explained in her comment that,

“Pre-service teachers are being exposed to possible problems and consequences that occur during service-learning. For example, pre-service teachers need to manage and conduct the activities for a certain period”.

Challenges and complications often occur in a classroom, and a teacher should be able to control and manage the classroom. As stated by (Hero & Lindfors, 2019), service-learning offers an authentic experience that provides challenging tasks and promotes active learning among pre-service teachers. Respondent 16 mentioned that they were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in teaching.

“Through face to face meeting with the students, the teacher will be able to tell the students’ weaknesses and strengths as well as help them by giving solutions through discussion”.

Participant 16 expressed that,

“We were given the students’ essay to identify the students’ strengths and weaknesses and provide better solutions for them.”

During the teaching and learning process, the teachers can recognize their teaching technique as it may and may not be effective. Service-learning provides the chance to guide and overcome complications as well as develop critical thinking to ensure that the teaching can be helpful (Siew et al., 2015). Other than that, service-learning proposes real-life responsibilities that the students will face. Mitchell (2008) stated that service-learning helps to connect students and institutions by providing service, while instilling moral and social responsibilities among students. They will have to be responsible for teaching and ensure that it is valuable and practical at the same time, caters to all the students’ needs.
Participant eight detailed,

“We were required to develop our own teaching materials which connect to our creativity and at the same time cater to the students’ needs to improve writing”.

Through service-learning, students will also be able to learn how to manage a classroom. Service-learning has proven to develop skills and provide real-life experiences (Coffey & Lavery, 2015). Managing a real-life classroom is not a situation or the environment that is common to see among tertiary-level students. Mock-teachings may have helped them in exposing possible challenges; however, it is nothing to be compared with the actual situation. During the impromptu interviews, the pre-service teachers often implied that it was difficult and challenging for them to handle the students as some are quite shy and introverts, as well as encouraging them to learn. Respondent 13 stated that service-learning assisted them in managing the classroom to ensure the students’ attention and good behavior. In her comment, she noted that,

“Teachers will have to face inquiries as well as students’ behavior. Teachers would have to deal with lazy and uncooperative students”.

Respondent 32 explained that,

“Service-learning provides authentic experience in a way that it prepares the teachers for the unexpected students’ behavior. So, this unexpected behavior will make the teachers more creative to tackle their students’ attention and helps them to improve”.

Participant 28 mentioned,

“It wasn’t easy to handle the students despite we only get to mentor three to four of the students only. Some of them are very passive and some of them are very active. We have to make sure that all students can achieve the objectives in learning”.

Participant 24 said,

“Teachers really do have to be patient. It was not easy but I know it is better to hold the anger or frustrations than letting it go on students”.

Being a teacher is essential to show moral values and the right attitude towards the students (DeNobile, 2019).

**Hands-on Experience in Interacting with the Students**

Having to experience for oneself is significantly different from learning in a lecture hall. The service-learning experience provides adventure and outdoor activities through a field trip experience (Tice & Nelson, 2008). Not only that, the pre-service teachers were able to conduct the activities along with the students themselves and have a one-on-one consultation with them. The trainee teachers were given two to three students for them to monitor and conduct activities. From here, they were able to identify the students’ weaknesses, strengths and their complications in ESL learning, especially in writing. The trainee teachers were also able to come up with suitable solutions for the students in learning as well as encouraging them to learn using various methods. Among the methods implemented would be learning through games, utilization of technology, and social media. In order to grab the millennials’ attention, it is vital that teaching and learning session can match with the students’ needs who are digital natives (Bowser et al., 2014; Hashim, Yunus, & Embi, 2016; Wan Azli et al., 2018).
Participant 50 expressed,
“I was able to use Facebook as a medium to teach writing in ESL. The students are millennials; hence it is vital to implement technology in teaching”.

Participant 47 answered,
“The students are really into games so we taught them using board games”.

Participant 38 mentioned,
“Games such as Quizizz, Kahoot were implemented in teaching to attract the students’ attention. We also played board games”.

Other than that, the trainee teachers can interact and communicate with the students before the event via WhatsApp. They were able to discuss with the students on the challenges faced in writing and understand the students’ proficiency in ESL. It is crucial to ensure that teachers have decent communication skills. As asserted by Whistance (2018), for the pre-service teachers to explore opportunities in an authentic experience, the pre-service teacher should be able to communicate effectively with their students. Embedding service-learning in the coursework can undoubtedly improve pre-service teachers’ soft skills such as problem-solving skills, leadership skills, and communication skills. Service-learning also allows pre-service teachers to apply theory into practice and understand the complexities of real-life problems, thereby preparing them to be future leaders (Onal et al., 2017). Knowing the students and the early exposure towards the students’ complications in learning can improve their communication skills. Participant 23 stated that they were able to communicate, understand the challenges faced by the students, and come up with an appropriate technique to teach them. She expressed that,

“We were able to communicate through a WhatsApp group and make discussion. I was able to correct their essays. I also gave them some English exercises to be done. When we finally met, I was introduced to the ‘Burger’ format”.

Participant 18 reflected in her comment that,
“Through service-learning, pre-service teachers are allowed to apply all theories that have been taught in the classroom”.

Also, Participant 14 added in her comment that,
“Exposing novice teachers with more real-life experiences is important as they will have more experience in teaching and creating various types of learning strategies to deliver knowledge to the students. The experiences will make the teachers more creative and innovative”.

Participant 46 said,
“Not only the students get to improve their writing and communication, but the pre-service teachers were also able to improve their own writing and communication. This is because the teachers have to do some research on how to teach the students proper writing skills and grammar”.

The pre-service teachers were also given real sample essays from the students for them to mark. Before the event, the students were instructed to write an essay. The essays were later collected and distributed to the teachers according to their group. The pre-service teachers were also able to experience marking and grading. Through marking real sample essays, the pre-service teachers were able to identify the students’ strengths and weaknesses.
and develop suitable teaching methods for the students. They were also able to develop critical thinking skills in identifying the errors and the possible solutions to it. The importance of offering pre-service teachers with new ideas will challenge their critical thinking and engage them in activities to solve problems (Ashton & Arlington, 2019). They also showed incredible creativity through handmade teaching materials in a game form to catch the students’ attention in learning.

Participant 33 mentioned that, 
“The pre-service teachers had the opportunity to use board games with the students to attract their attention and improve their grammar”.

Participant 19 reflected in his comment that, 
“The students were required to speak in English during teaching and learning session. Not only it can improve their English language skills, but it can also improve the pre-service teachers’ English language skills”.

**Applying Digital and Pedagogical Knowledge and Theories in a Real Classroom Environment**

As teachers, having digital and pedagogical knowledge and understanding the theories is crucial. However, understanding and memorizing the pedagogy and the teaching theories differ significantly from applying in a classroom environment. Service-learning also allows pre-service teachers to apply theory into practice and understand the complexities of real-life problems, thereby preparing them to be future leaders (Onal et al., 2017). Theories learned in lectures not only give extra knowledge and information on education in general, but it also can be applied in classroom to manage the students and classroom environment (Lasker, 2019). Participant 12 noted that they were able to physically use the theories learned as well as the pedagogical knowledge when teaching and find it extremely useful.

“I was able to use the theories that we learned in class in real life. It is very interesting to see how the theories work”.

Participant 10 stated in her comment that, 
“Through service-learning, pre-service teachers can teach writing at the same time they can improve themselves and understand the teaching methods better”.

Ryan and Healy (2009) explained that pre-service teachers could observe and endorse theories such as theories of communication, language, and learning and apply them in real-world contexts, particularly in the classroom. Other than that, using suitable teaching materials and methods would help the students to understand better. The pre-service teachers have developed and created a variety of teaching materials from handmade games to utilizing technology and social media. Participant nine stated that she uses Instagram to teach writing to the students as they are very familiar with social media. The students were also exposed to numerous ways of learning English.

She disclosed in her comment that, 
“Instagram is a very modern approach and every student seems to have an Instagram account. They were able to describe better through scrolling pictures on Instagram”.

Participant 13 mentioned, 
“Using technology in class was really able to break the ice. My students are very
passive and it was difficult to get them to participate, but when Instagram and Facebook were involved, they finally get to speak their opinions and participate”.

Service-learning allows pre-service teachers to apply their pedagogical knowledge for different contexts and diverse students. Other than that, service-learning provide the opportunity to apply age-old theories in a real-life environment. Renowned education theories such as Behaviorism are commonly being used among teachers to increase the students’ attention. During the event, the pre-service teachers were frequently being seen giving out extrinsic and intrinsic rewards such as chocolates and compliments to the students who improved and were able to answer the questions. Giving out rewards and compliments to the students helped them in getting out of their comfort zone.

Participant 12 stated that,

“Behaviorism is constantly used among pre-service teachers. Most pre-service teachers would bring gifts to the students who did their work”.

Respondent 22 mentioned,

“Whenever the students did a good job, they will be given rewards. This encourages them to do better in the next session. It is important that teachers know a way to tackle the students’ interest and what caught their attention”.

Participant 51 said,

“The theory Behaviorism really helped. It is quite interesting to see students get really excited for rewards. At the same time, it motivates them to learn”.

Learning and applying what one has learned is a totally different experience. Pre-service teachers mentioned that they managed to implement theories and witnessed how the theories worked. Resch and Schrittesser (2019) expressed that service-learning stands out due to its uniqueness in allowing pre-service teachers to connect theory and practice by participating in community activities. It provides the authentic experiences in which the pre-service teachers may not achieve through reading.

Conclusion
Above all, service-learning has been proven in this study to bring countless exposure and authentic experience to the pre-service teachers. It is pivotal that teacher training programs implement effective training approaches and strategies to ensure that the pre-service teachers can be well-equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. This is due to the constant reoccurring problems such as unpreparedness and the inability to adapt to changes. Pre-service teachers are seemingly not ready to teach in the real world. Hence, proper training should be given to the pre-service teachers in order to curb these problems. Service-learning is one of the most effective approaches that can be implemented in teacher training programs. This study aims to investigate TESL pre-service teachers’ perceptions towards service-learning in terms of authentic experiences.

Based on the findings, this study also suggests that service-learning is one of the most effective ways of training teachers before venturing into schools. Early exposure to the pre-service teachers to possible outcomes and challenges in schools is crucial as they will not experience the unexpected in an indoor classroom environment. There were also able to enjoy more independent and meaningful learning. Service-learning provides authenticity in learning.
that cannot be achieved in a lecture hall. This study also believes that service-learning offers the opportunity of interacting with the students. Service-learning or often associates with education in action requires students to be active and participate in activities. Hands-on experience is crucial as having to conduct an activity leaves a longer trace in one memory. This study also found that service-learning allows students to apply what they have learned in class to a real-life environment. Learning and applying pedagogical knowledge and education theories to a real-life event differs significantly as applying in real life guarantees a better understanding of the context.

It is believed that future teachers and educational organizations can benefit from this in gaining and understanding the benefits and effects of service-learning in teachers’ training programs. Service-learning is essential to be employed in the teacher training programs as it proved to be useful and bring numerous positive impacts to the pre-service teachers’ attitudes and behaviors. Service-learning can also improve pre-service teachers’ soft skills such as communication and leadership skill. Service-learning is crucial to be embedded in teacher training courses as part of the coursework. Future researchers can investigate the challenges and other benefits of service-learning in teachers’ training programs.

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Strategies of Teaching Writing at Saudi Tertiary-Level Institutions: Reality and Expectations

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Abstract

Teaching writing in English is a particularly daunting task for EFL teachers. Much of it concerns teaching accuracy in text production, development and thought expression which is usually not the teachers’ stated aim. Thus, teachers’ perceptions to the teaching of writing and the actual classroom practices need examination, which is the aim of this study, a prerequisite to recommending pedagogical changes to bridge the gap that exists between educational aims and outcomes so far as the teaching of writing to EFL learners in Saudi tertiary level educational institutions is concerned. The study applies a quantitative approach via a survey conducted with one hundred EFL teachers at Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMBSIU, henceforth), Qassim University and King Khaled University, Saudi Arabia. Results suggest that inadequate English resources and inefficient teaching methods are, in general, the main causes of poor writing skills. Further, the teachers perceive limited lexis, irregular sentences, and orthographical differences with the mother tongue as impediments in the learners’ ability to write well in English. The study concludes with some pertinent recommendations to remedy the situation.

Keywords: EFL teachers, learners, perceptions, strategies, tertiary, writing

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Introduction

Writing, due to various intrinsic attributes and extrinsic factors, seems to be the most challenging skill for language learners, both as the first and/or as the second or foreign language, relative to other main skills of listening, reading and speaking (Keller, Fleckenstein, Krüger, Köller, & Rupp. 2020; Thomas, 2020). It is often a solitary, burdensome undertaking, usually given as homework and therefore unsupported, leaving one to their own devices. There is a lot of research specifically on the problems of writing in EFL, but in practice, students still ‘dread’ writing and compositional tasks. Writing, however, is a fundamental and practical skill that, among others, enables one to be more than the passive recipient of linguistic input, more importantly, fosters critical thinking abilities. While writing, students have the opportunity to express and evaluate their thoughts and feelings, whether consciously or unconsciously. With young EFL learners, it becomes doubly challenging since they are both learning a language and, at the same time, their opinions and worldviews are largely unformed, and the process of creating well-thought units and structures in a foreign language efficiently appears an arduous task in the eyes of young learners. Writing is essentially a visual and imaginative enterprise represented by, and atomized in, words. It uses symbols to reflect speech patterns, including signs as punctuation and numerals, and defines the language units in action.

In their article on writing for learners of the first and/or second language, Raimes (1983) sees writing as the skill that comes with the most baggage, among other things, of fright, disinterest, anguish, and nail-biting. Though it may come as a surprise to teachers of different subjects that writing should be such a big challenge for the learner of English, the fact of the matter is that it is no less challenging even for native speakers of languages. Reasons are many, and complex too, but what makes writing a particularly difficult and uninteresting task is the hackney-ism that might be seeped into the process, low innovation, and the difference in space and time of the communication that the written word is intended to achieve (Al-Ahdal, 2020a; 2020b).

Compared to speaking, writing discounts the message that is partly conveyed by expressions, tone, intonation and pitch, body language, eye contact, and above all, the instant feedback offered by spontaneous dialog. The writer is removed from his/her readers, unable to predict who the readers will be and what kind of preconceived notions and knowledge they will encounter when reading the text created by them. Therefore, writing requires an effort to think and organise ideas in a more logical sequence and better proficiency in the language and grammatical rules. It also requires adequate vocabulary bank, knowledge and awareness of syntax and morphology and all the wherewithal of linguistic ability that aids communication, including the very powerful and ever-present challenge of L1 (first language) interference.

The question of teaching writing and EFL teachers’ perceptions of it has long been a matter of debate and controversy in the EFL community. Too often, teachers would rather put off, if not entirely do away with, the activity under the pretence that it is ‘too difficult to teach’ and that it is enough if learners pick up whatever they can in writing along the way as they move on (Al-Ahdal & Al-Mashaqba, 2016). They are generally unsympathetic to, and condescendingly dismissive of, learners’ poor textual output, deeming it good enough as it is, and are outright averse to finding why learners find it difficult to write in English. During informal interviews to test the hypothesis, it was informative to find that in EFL teachers’ perceptions, the smallest unit
of writing was considered to be the sentence. In other words, when they undertake teaching writing, they ask learners to focus on the grammatical correctness of the sentence. Though ‘correct’ production of text is indeed one of the aims of teaching writing, emphasizing only that aspect of the task results in the accuracy rather than the expression of the desired outcome. Writing as a process involves certain stages not precisely understood by these teachers, including but not limited to, the accuracy of expression with the text being organised as a coherent discourse based on logical sequencing of ideas for the writing of disjointed and unconnected sentences in the hope of improving the learners’ writing skills. This paper examines the existing gap between the objectives of teaching writing, teachers’ perceptions of teaching writing, and the actual pedagogical practices undertaken to accomplish the task.

Teaching English involves four core skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing. Writing, for various reasons, has come to be the most challenging skill for both, students to learn, and teachers to impart (Abedi, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019; Kardena, Syarif, & Zaim, 2020; Sukmawati & Nasution, 2020). It is an integrated communicative competency that requires intelligent and purposive allocation of time and resources. Compared to speaking, writing requires more rigorous planning and organization because it is by nature deprived of the advantages of the intuitive and spontaneous nature of speech production offers, such as the use of fillers, pauses and gestures. Unlike the interlocutor, the writer is expected to be more logical and to-the-point since the reader enters the writer’s world expecting equally organized and to-the-point content. In terms of motivation, it is interesting to know that many students ‘dread’ writing to the point that they even refuse to physically participate in composition classes, with writing seminars having the highest number of absentees. With English as a foreign language (EFL), the issue becomes even more severe, where the language taught is seldom offered outside the classroom environment. According to the theory of contemplated conduct, students' discernments and perceptions of a subject relate directly to their academic success and/or failure. The influence of learner cognition and perceptions of their classroom writing sessions is also a determining factor.

Writing proficiency is not only desired but also required because of its importance to students’ future academic and professional success (Bracewell, 2020; Seçer & Yücel-Toy, 2020; Zahroh, Mujiyanto & Saleh, 2020; Surya, et al., 2020). Communicating efficiently is the cornerstone of any occupation regardless of how unrelated writing may seem to a specific field, it is important to consider writing as an essential component of one’s skillset. Although most modern-day workplaces have become more ‘casual’ in terms of communication, it is still important to maintain professionalism in email correspondences or other written exchanges. Texts ‘battered’ by incorrect grammar or typos may undermine one’s professionalism and attention to detail. According to Darmawangsa, Mutiarsih, Karimah, & Racmadhany (2020), academic writing encompasses an interpretation of distinctive concepts and experiences focused on the specific or general skills of writing. Writing requires, and at the same time encourages, inventiveness, innovation and clear mutual comprehension. It is a cognitive activity requiring a brain process that involves visualization and imagination in order to form concepts and ideas. Therefore, it is essential to develop students’ writing skills from early levels as they are important communication skills in this globalized, interconnected world. Because of its importance, most countries, including Saudi Arabia, have made the English language mandatory.
in education. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, students study English from preschool to varsity level.

This study proposes to fulfil two objectives: To investigate teachers’ perceptions of teaching writing at Saudi tertiary level educational institutions, and to propose practical pedagogical measures for improving students’ writing skills in these institutions. Based on these objectives, this study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the EFL teachers at Saudi tertiary level institutions of the teaching of writing?
2. What are the perceived and actual obstacles to achieving the objectives of teaching writing in these institutions?
3. Is it possible to realize the objectives of teaching writing by introducing pedagogical changes to the educational system?

Research Problem

Writing is an essential linguistic and communicative skill for EFL learners in Saudi tertiary level institutions as they need to be able to write adequately in the language for their present and future educational and professional success. They come to these institutions in the hope of attaining a certain level of communicative competence that would empower them to develop and exchange information, ideas, and particular or general arguments. First and foremost, it is EFL teachers’ responsibility to help them fulfil their communicative potential in writing. However, these learners have been observed not to be adequately competent writers at the end of their institution term. This study aims to investigate the reasons for this institutional mishap and to suggest ways to address learners' needs. Mastery of structure and complex linguistic components such as syntax, terminology, expressions and phrases, and psychological and emotional restraints are deterrent factors. This study focuses primarily on addressing these issues and attempts to find answers that lead to practical procedures and processes.

Significance of the Study and Research Context

Writing is a form of exchanging concepts, opinions and feelings. Writing in ESL and EFL also has the added advantage of offering students an opportunity to both learn a language and to be able to convey thoughts, emotions and viewpoints freshly and differently from one’s mother tongue. The present research is significant because it informs a wide range of professionals involved in research on writing for academic and/or professional needs. It will also help realise the ambitious yet achievable objectives of Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030, particularly, its stated aim of creating a vibrant, informed and forward-looking society with qualified graduates. Our younger generation’s ability to be able to communicate with the global community using English, as the international lingua franca, is thus a given in this direction, as it has permeated every field, whether academic, economic, political or social. We need to empower our people to interact with the outside world efficiently and collaboratively.

One reason for students’ inability to write is that they have not been taught to start the writing process (Al-Ahdal, Alfallaj, Al-Awaied, & Al-Hattami, 2014; Alfallaj & Al-Ahdal, 2017; Magulod, 2018), which is, in turn, due to problems such as the fact that there has historically been little demand and ‘push’ from the teachers for creativity and innovation in writing classes. This has led to confusion, frustration and inability to write down the very first sentence, metaphorically speaking, as they are unaccustomed to forming outlines and well-structured
thought processes epitomized in, and essential to the act of writing. The seemingly simple question of the starting point of writing is a great challenge before the Saudi Arabian student and it is common for teachers to hear them complain in words such as "I do have a lot in my mind, I would like to write down, but I don’t know where to start", and "I overthink and constantly change my mind about the topic I want to write and feel crippled and alone in this". Writing is, therefore, an essential skill for Saudi Arabian students in that they learn to use the proper structure for the optimal conveyance of ideas logically and reliably.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have been done on the role of teacher/learner perceptions and teaching English as a second or foreign language. In his analysis of English teachers’ perceptions in East Java and Indonesia, Hidayati (2018) concluded that there were two types of factors that posed a challenge before the teachers. The first were internal factors, including language competence, mother tongue interference and poor learner motivation and their reading habits. The second type were the external factors such as infrastructural realities and limitations and pressure from institutional authorities. According to Butler, Trosclair, Zhou and Wei (2014), assessing teacher/learner perceptions in second language learning is important as conflicting perceptions can lead to a failure in achieving learning objectives. Ferede, Melese, and Tefera (2012) examined the perceptions of teaching English writing and the actual teaching practices of teachers in Ethiopia. Their findings showed that due to teachers’ flawed and misplaced perceptions, their teaching practice was equally flawed and did not bear the intended results. In a similar study of English teachers’ perceptions of teaching writing, Fu and Matoush (2011) found the problem to be too much emphasis on rather ‘linguistically controlled language instruction’ than ensuring proficiency as a communication tool. Skills orientation was also almost exclusively test-driven and teacher preparation was minimal. Students’ speaking skills can further benefit from practicing writing since it offers an opportunity to learn ‘rarer’ vocabulary, syntax and structures, punctuation and, in general, language. Also, though writing skills are important for interpersonal communication, they are just as important externally, if not more so, for online publication which is the aim of most academics. The content that is difficult to understand, poorly written, or has spelling or grammatical errors can hardly be published, no matter how informative and rich the content may be.

Theories of Teaching Writing

Theories of teaching writing are essential in that they equip teachers with ideas that result in better and more intelligent practice. In his theorization of the process of teaching writing, Hodges (2017) outlined four key areas:

The Cognitive Process Theory of Writing

Writing is a thinking process involving mental mechanisms such as brainstorming, preparation and organizing. The cognitive writing theory and the methodology it presents, help students learn how to use conceptual thinking and integrate it into their writing process. The hypothesis was further developed by Flower and Hayes (1981) by taking into account student feedback, leading to the incorporation of the theory of cognitive processes into literary prose composition. The theory holds that since writers experience a thought phase before writing, it is important to establish macro- and micro-goals and a more inclusive hierarchical framework, and to set specific and clear objectives to achieve the goal(s) of writing.
The Sociocultural Theory of Writing

The sociocultural theory of writing was formulated by the Soviet psychologist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky. His theory views a thinking agent’s development as a socially mediated process in which they acquire their cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society. Vygotsky's theory is comprised of concepts such as culture-specific tools, private speech, and the Zone of Proximal Development. In short, it emphasizes the role of inspiration, effect and social forces as the main components of writing. Another significant aspect of his theory is the recognition of the role of socialization and engagement in the production of mental behavior or information retention phase. According to the theory of Zone of Proximal Development, students need assistance and socialization, in the form of collaboration with their teachers and peers, to improve and acquire the language in its fullness as a social concept (Vygotsky, 1978).

Social Cognitive Theory and Self-efficacy in Writing

The social cognitive theory relates to the interaction between cognitive, physiological, personal and environmental variables to assess motivation and actions (Bandura, 1993). It focuses on the three major components of observational learning, imitation and simulation. In the pedagogical context, its effectiveness and success rely on the teacher’s ability to help students carry on with the written task and overcome obstacles as they transpire. It would further aid them to select professions where they have strong self-efficacy and avoid tasks with poor performance (Bandura, 2001). Self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reaction and self-efficacy are its four principal objectives to be met in order for students’ full potential to be realized.

Ecological Theory

According to the ecological theory of writing, students collaborate in the class to build structures within which the learner and the written product both control and are controlled by the scripts of other students in the environment. A writing ecology requires more than the individual writer and their immediate background. One of the critical aspects of this theory is that the attributes of a particular writer or writers are both described and dictated by other writers' attributes. Another significant aspect of the ecological process is its inherent versatility, which means although frameworks and contents may be described relative to a specific period, they constantly change in actual periods. This principle is restricted to shifting over longer times. In a study using the Reading to Learn strategy in teaching academic writing to Indonesian tertiary level EFL learners, Listyani (2018) gathered some useful results. First, Reading to Learn is effective to teach Academic Writing. Secondly, not all tertiary students like working cooperatively. Some prefer working individually. The next conclusion is students perceive peer review as an important part of their essay writing.

Teaching Writing

Teaching writing involves the employment, and impartation, of different techniques and strategies to learners to make them become, ideally, autonomous writers in their own right (Kim & Kang, 2020; Lee, 2020; Timizar-Le Pen, Marchand, Léocadie, & Rothan-Tondeur, 2020). It includes a wide array of approaches that attempt to bridge the gap between beliefs about writing with methods employed by writers that in turn affect the production of writing outcomes. In this way, the written text is embodied by the concepts, rules, and ethics relevant to the writing method that were implemented, especially in teaching classrooms. Since writing methods are
essential to any lesson planning in writing, the techniques employed should be able to realistically arrive at the intended outcomes. In other words, to see a successful impact in students’ writing output, it is important to set the right strategies. Otherwise, the tasks will be overwhelming and demoralizing for both students and teachers, as they see no return for their hard work. An example of setting effective strategies would be to introduce the minimal experience to a product-centered method to beginners, as templates or examples are required to begin their journey via writing. A writing classroom without a set aim, approach and methodology, is doomed to trial and error with great, irreversible loss of valuable time and resources to learners and educators.

Methods

The current study is quantitative in nature and it employs a detailed questionnaire developed by Hedge (1988) to assess teachers’ approach to teaching of writing. It may be added that some items were modified merely to accommodate the Saudi context, though without changing the factor loading of the questions. This was administered to one hundred EFL teachers from three Saudi Arabian tertiary-level educational institutions of Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud University, Qassim University and King Khalid University. They were selected randomly to ensure the reliability of generalizations of the findings. The responses to the questionnaire were stacked into a writing matrix with the format presented below, as a guide to the respondents as to what to follow on writing challenges:

1. Types of writing
2. Difficulties in writing
3. Improving drafts
4. Collaboration

These categories were selected since the researcher’s personal teaching experience spanning more than a decade had led to the formation of these categories as being significant so far as EFL writing was concerned. Relevant recommendations based on inferences from the above categories will be presented in the conclusion and implications section of the study.

Results and Discussion

The study shows that Saudi students, as expressed by the participants/teachers, consider writing 'summaries' (4.25) the most important written task and writing ‘topic expressions and supporting material’ (4.08) as second in importance. Less than one standard deviation suggests that participants did not display significant variation in their answers to these two factors.

Table 1. Tasks perceived as significant by teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic sentences and supporting details</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph writing</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summaries</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter writing</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative essays</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive essays</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative essays</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository essays</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Numerous studies have shown that Saudi Arabian students have serious problems in their essential writing skills (El Tantawi, Sadaf, & AlHumaid, 2018; Imsa-ard, 2020; Zemni & Alrefae, 2020; McMaster, et al, 2019; Go Silk, et al, 2020; Oppenheimer, et al, 2017; Rakedzon & Baram-Tsabari, 2017). Participants, in these and other studies, have been observed to comparatively assign lesser rates of value to the factors important to writing different types of essays. It can be inferred that in general, participants do not consider writing classes helpful in their writing since they are not even able to reach paragraph-level competency in writing.

Table 2. Problems faced in academic writing tasks as perceived by teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate vocabulary</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spellings</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of articles</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of prepositions</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of irregular verbs</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of question words</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Tasks perceived as significant by teachers

Figure 2. Problems faced in academic writing tasks as perceived by teacher
Table three indicates that the insufficient number of language courses, few opportunities to use English outside the university and insufficient audio-visual facilities in the classrooms were regarded as three top causes of poor academic writing skills by the participants. However, standard deviation among all eight factors was not significant, implying that participants, by and large, attributed students’ poor performance to all of the factors equally. Other obstructive factors included low English language proficiency, teachers' lack of interest in writing tasks, insufficient writing practice, inappropriate teaching methods and insufficient use of dictionaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low English language proficiency</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Insufficient number of language courses</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teachers' lack of interest in writing tasks</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Few opportunities to use English outside the university</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Inappropriate teaching methods</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Insufficient writing practice</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.087</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Insufficient audio-visual facilities in the classrooms</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Insufficient use of dictionaries</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3. Reasons for poor academic writing skills**

Writing has a special role in the academic world globally. Educational institutions try to train students to write competently as writing skills will be essential to their success and will help them to be able to analyse, exchange ideas and think critically and objectively. In higher education in particular, writing can be more difficult for students due to complex subjects that require equally complex language. As a thinking tool, writing can be used for language development and for testing one’s language skills. The results of the present study suggest that inadequate English resources and insufficient teaching methods are, in general, the main causes of poor writing skills. The data show the main reasons for this situation among Saudi learners are attributed more to external factors, i.e. institutional policies, faculties and the predominant culture, than internal causes, students’ own accountability for their learning, with the latter having significantly lower average values (Al-Saleh, 2018 Alhujaylan, 2019; Khan & Khan, 2016; Al-Mudhi, 2019; Tanrikulu, 2020).
Students in Saudi Arabian schools still shun and/or postpone writing. Most find learning writing a difficult task that needs a lot of time and work. Writing, in a sense, is a laborious activity in that various subcomponents need to be integrated for it to work. There are also individual issues such as dyslexia or dysgraphia, among others. Teachers believe students grapple with the slower, more detailed form of written correspondence due to the faster and predominantly visual input they are exposed and accustomed to on a daily basis on social media and in contemporary lifestyle in general. Students also “can’t write” because sometimes the teaching methodology is not efficient and motivating. An efficient approach, and its concomitant methods and techniques, try to present writing as a positive and fulfilling activity where poor performance is addressed and resolved in a friendly but professional manner. Unmotivated students can hardly learn anything, especially when that “thing” is an essential and demanding skill in the calibre of writing. As students are at present largely comprised of the so-called “millenials” and “Generation Z” (or Zoomers), enhanced automation infrastructure can be introduced to improve students’ overall digital learning using the tools they are used to and are welcomed by them (Al-Ahdal, et al, 2014; Alfallaj and Al-Ahdal, 2017; Pimada, et al, 2020; Valizadeh and Soltanpour, 2020).

This study considers writing as an essential capacity that enables students to use and learn a new language in a coherent and communicative context and is also a means to clearly and effectively communicate emotions, concepts and feelings (Al-Ahdal & Alqasham, 2020; Keller, et al., 2020; Landicho, 2020; Uludag, et al, 2019). Teaching it, however, is one of the biggest challenges faced by any educational body worldwide. Writing requires three stages: pre-write, write and post-write (Alkhudiry, Al-Ahdal, & Alkhudiry, 2020; Magulod, 2018; McDonough & De Vleeschauwer, 2019; Payant, et al, 2019). In the prewriting phase, students gather data and outline the content, whether it is writing a story, a survey, a letter or a paragraph. Writing paragraphs in particular, is a basic skill needed by educational institutions. A paragraph consists of three main parts: a topic, details and a conclusion and can be written for the purposes of narration, information, recapitulation, reporting, argumentation and description. In the writing phase, they form their drafts into the written text and in the post-writing process, they collaborate with their teacher to improve the quality of the written piece. In the second half of the twentieth century, there were improvements in the teaching of English writing: until the seventies, writing was treated as a product, then as a process and finally as a means for students to learn while writing. Writing now is intended to help students effectively learn, which means they are supposed to practice writing until they are qualified at advanced levels.

Conclusion

The study set out to investigate the perceptions of tertiary level EFL teachers to the teaching of writing since it is recognized that though writing is a primary skill for higher education, it is also one largely ignored in Saudi tertiary level institutions. Learners’ motivation and teachers’ attitudes to the learning and teaching respectively can be decisive in determining the achievement of class objectives, and hence their evaluation needs to be given primacy. The results of this study, despite the relatively low number of participants surveyed (which can be considered one of its limitations), provide valuable insight into the challenges faced by Saudi EFL students in their academic writing. Responses from participants indicate that graduates of major English universities usually do not find it necessary to practice composing different types of essays, for which the instructor is advised to offer students sufficient time and rigorous
attention. This empirical study also found that Saudi students’ inability to compose and commit academic errors was mainly due to lexical aspects, irregular sentences, and orthography.

Implications to Teaching
Given the poor attendance rate of Saudi students in EFL writing classes in universities and colleges, it seems inevitable to modify the present institutionalized teaching practices and mindsets to address and overcome this unfortunate state. Recent studies point to a rising tendency among Saudi teachers to embrace newer, more ‘unconventional’ teaching approaches that allow for the incorporation of new and innovative teaching strategies, to inspire students to take up an active role in their classroom activities and their learning in general. It is equally important to equip classrooms with the requisite infrastructure, e.g. audio-visual devices that help with presentation tasks among others. To identify those with more severe writing problems, an assessment test must be administered to students entering colleges, to tailor the content to their needs. Despite universal access to digital online resources, for both teachers and students, faculty members are advised to consult proper dictionaries to ensure that the quality and correctness of speech is observed and restored. Teachers should also inform students about the aims of teaching the particular course and writing at large.

The current study stresses the importance of introducing a new approach to teaching writing skills as current practices do not meet students' needs and do not help them improve and elevate their writing competency. As mentioned earlier in passing, a limitation of this research was the relatively low number of respondents considering it was intended to address a national problem. This was due to a shortage of time and the consequent restraint of meeting deadlines. The study focussed on writing; in the future, similar diagnostic research can be carried out regarding other language skills of speaking, listening and reading.

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References


**Appendix 1**

**Questionnaire**

1. What is your opinion about writing as a skill in the EFL classroom and the current tasks and activities?
2. Can you list five reasons why you think writing is important in EFL classes?
3. What is required in the writing for your students to pass their English exam?
4. In your classes, what is the nature of the ‘text’ that your students are required to produce?
5. To what extent do you think students’ assumptions of the difficulty of writing in the foreign language is responsible for the fact that they find English writing tasks difficult?
6. What are the difficulties you, as the teacher, typically face while writing in English?
7. When you assign a writing task, do you work with your student by, for example, helping them revise and edit their work?
8. Is collaboration favoured by your students when they are asked to write?
9. Do you administer techniques such as peer correction or self-correction of the written work?
10. Do you assign writing tasks separately or are they integrated with other skills and tasks?
11. Can you list five causes that in your opinion stymie EFL learners’ efforts to improve their writing skills?
Tailoring Potent Courses for ESP Learners: A Way to Better Fulfil their Demands

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Abstract
In this day and age, it is absolutely indispensable for acquiring competence in English to grapple with the real impediments and huge challenges of the modern epoch. The emergence of English as a global language is among the factors that could explicate its vitality and its expansion. The basic burden of making language courses more relevant to learners’ needs resulted in the advent of languages for specific purposes movement, known in English Language Teaching circles as English for Specific Purposes. ESP then, has since its inception in the early 1960s become one of the most dynamic branches of applied linguistics in general, and of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in particular. To amass relevant data, a case study was conducted through a combination of a questionnaire, classroom observation, and informal interviews with language teachers and subject specialists. The main aim of this present paper is to precisely delineate the teaching/learning process of ESP in the department of Computer Sciences at the University of ORAN1 in Algeria, and the learners’ attitudes towards this teaching. For this purpose, it is necessary to explore the utility of ESP as perceived by learners, and to address problems faced by instructors. The results indicate that the students have a positive attitude towards ESP and that their poor achievement was due to multiple reasons. This digest concludes by offering some suggestions and implications as remedial actions to the major confronted concerns.

Keywords: course design, ESP students, learners’ attitudes, learners’ demands, motivation, needs analysis

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, the whole globe has become interconnected and narrow as English serves the purpose as a common language and a global one. It plays an eminent role in almost all the territories presently. In consequence, a good command of English in an alien language situation is the passport to social, scientific, economic, technological and educational growth, and the good user of English identifies himself as a successful and an integrated member when he covers a lot of ground of that language community. To satisfy those wants, more and more persons have extremely specific academic and professional motives for the betterment of their language skills. For these learners, usually adults, courses fall under the heading of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) whose aim was then to equip learners with a command of English in an efficient manner by basing courses on what students actually needed rather than teaching the whole language system (Woodrow, 2018).

ESP Elemental Foundations

This section offers an understanding of the major qualities and requirements of ESP.

What is ESP?

ESP is known as a learner-centred approach to teaching English as a foreign language. It meets the demands of learners who need to learn English for use in their specific areas. English for specific purposes (ESP) refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). The ESP approach to language teaching began as a response to a number of practical concerns; especially to meet the needs of students who want English relevant to their field of specialism or to use it in their future career. In relation to that, Mackay and Mountford (1978) stated that “ESP is generally used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose” (p.2). Thus, in the realm of ESP, the primary focus is upon the specific language appropriate to the target disciplines (areas of study) or occupations. Robinson (1991) writes to this effect “Students study English not because they are interested in the English language culture as such but because they need English for study or work purposes” (p.2). For Robinson, ESP learners study English for utilitarian reasons not in order to integrate in the Target-Language Community.

ESP Traits

In 1998, Dudley-Evans and St John noted that there has been considerable debate about the meaning of ESP. They modified Strevens’ definition (1998) to postulate their own which makes a distinction between absolute and variable characteristics.

The Absolute Characteristics of ESP
1- ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners.
2- ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves
3- ESP is centred on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

The Variable Characteristics of ESP
1- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines.
2- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English.
3- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level.
4- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.
5- Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system.

The division of ESP into ‘absolute’ and ‘variable’ characteristics, in particular, could be helpful in resolving arguments about what is or is not ESP. In the definition they offered, Dudley-Evans and St John have removed the absolute features that ESP has in contrast with English for General Purposes (EGP) and added more variable aspects. Furthermore, they claim that ESP can be but is not necessarily concerned with a scientific discipline, nor does it target a certain age group or ability range.

In parallel, a practical suggestion for ESP teaching is given by Mc Donough (1984) when he affirms that English is “best identified as the distinction between language as a subject... and as a service” (p.5).

**Needs Analysis**

An important principle of ESP approaches to language teaching is that a well-founded educational program should be based on an analysis of learners’ needs rather than developing a course around an analysis of the language. Procedures used to collect information about learners’ needs are known as needs analysis. At its most basic, needs analysis involves finding out and interpreting information about what the learners know and can do and what they need to learn or do, so that the course will address them effectively.

Acknowledging its importance as a crucial quality of ESP course design, Mc Donough (1984) comments “The idea of analyzing the language needs of the learner as a basic for course development has become almost synonymous with ESP” (p.29). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) too admit the weightiness of needs analysis for ESP, but they add that “What distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need” (p.53).

**Who is involved in Needs Analysis?**

A needs analysis may be conveyed for a variety of users:
- Curriculum officers in the ministry of education, who may use the collected information to develop syllabuses, curriculums, and materials.
- Teachers who will teach from the curriculum.
- Learners who will be taught from the curriculum.
- Writers who are planning new textbooks.

**The Aims of Needs Analysis**

Needs analysis in language teaching provides the core information that is essential in establishing programs, it may be used for dissimilar purposes, for example:
- To determine the cause of performance deficiencies and potential solutions.
- To value the extent to which learners’ needs are met by currently available programs and textbooks.

Richards (2005) identifies the following purposes for needs analysis:
To help determine if an existing course adequately addresses the need of potential students.
To determine which students from a group are most in need of training in particular language skills.
To identify a gap between what students are able to do and what they need to be able to do.
To collect information about a particular problem learners are experiencing.

As a result, needs analysis is a vital facet of ESP course design, and its significance is acknowledged as a preliminary step in ESP teaching.

**ESP Course Design**

Course design refers to the planning of a course to achieve desired instrumental goals. The process entails identifying appropriate goals, choosing content consistent with the goals, selecting ways of accomplishing the goals, and assessing student learning in relation to the goals.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have defined a course as “an integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge” (p.65). In ESP contexts, the course will take into account not only the subject area but the students (business, computer sciences, etc.) in terms of topics and themes, but also the lexical, semantic and structural aspects of the language features of that subject area.

Moreover, the functions and language forms that are more frequent in ESP must be identified. The goal aimed at is basically to bring students to a level of communicative capability that gives them the competence to function in their area of interest. Close, in Mc Donough’s book, summarises the three necessary hierarchical stages through which an ESP course is built: “A foundation that could serve for any purpose (would refer to as a common core). A superstructure that could serve for any scientific purpose. A later superstructure that could serve for some specific scientific purpose” (as cited in Mc Donough, 1984, p.54).

Furthermore, developing a course requires that the teachers should ask questions about what the body of content, how best to impart knowledge to students, and how to assess what students are learning. The process of course development for the teacher is represented by Graves as follows:

![Figure 1. Process of course development for the teacher (Adapted from Graves, 2004, p.4)](image-url)
Consequently, course development includes planning a course, teaching it, and modifying the plan, both while the course is in progress and after the course is over (Graves, 2004). So, a well-designed syllabus featuring strong and achievable learning objectives is the key to a successful course. It helps outlining what students are expected to know and be able to do.

A concise outline of a course of study is also the students’ introduction to the teacher and to the course’s subject matter, assignments, and activities.

The Psychological Facets in ESP

Teaching is a process which encompasses two participants, the teacher and the learner. It may be affected by various factors such as teacher’s personality, classroom atmosphere, students’ behaviour, motivation, etc. The latter is still being investigated by psychologists of education and linguists who concede that a lot is to be said about, while putting forward its importance in teaching and learning.

Affective factors interfere in the learning process as much as cognitive constituents do. Factors like attitudes, motivation and anxiety are to be taken into consideration owing to the role they play in promoting or obstructing learning in general and foreign language learning in particular. As far as the ESP context is concerned, these aspects of the learner’s personality have a direct and capital influence on the ESP learner.

Learner’s Attitudes

The learner’s attitudes refer to the view he/she holds for learning basically and the foreign language specifically. Ultimately, successful learning seems to give a very significant place to the role of motivation. Without motivation, success in learning English or any other subject is unlikely. The attitude of learners who show poor motivation is described by Wright (1987) who asks “What are the symptoms of low motivation? Learners may exhibit a negative attitude to the subject you are teaching ...Attendance may fall off and learners who continue coming to class may be disruptive” (p.12). Through this description, Wright shows the negative effect of low motivation in the process of teaching and learning.

Learner’s Motivation

Motivation is the internal force that makes an individual behave the way he does. As far as learning is concerned, motivation directs the human being to make efforts to succeed in learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972), the pioneers in research and writing on motivation sketch it out as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language” (as cited in Ellis, 2000, p.509). Thus, three factors are included in effective language learning: positive attitude, will to learn and effort. Motivation, then, can be either integrative resulting from the learner’s positive attitudes towards the language and its target community and to be part of this group or instrumental aiming at reaching utilitarian reasons.

ESP learners are said to be instrumentally motivated towards learning English since they need it to benefit from the literature on computer science written in this language. The mastery of an international language like English is also required in the work sphere. Motivation in ESP is a
fundamental personal factor acknowledged by a great number of theoreticians in the domain educational psychology as put by Ellis (2004):

Not surprisingly teachers recognize the importance of motivation, both with regard to the motivation that students bring to the language classroom (extrinsic motivation) and the motivation that is generated inside the classroom through the choice of instructional activities (intrinsic motivation). Similarly, motivation has attracted increasing attention from researchers, reflected in a growing number of theoretical models of L2 motivation and in consequent research studies (p.11).

Therefore, in the view of Ellis, the paramountcy of motivation as an influencing effective factor in the teaching/learning process is behind the richness of literature on this psychological topic.

Thematic Scope

This part seeks to explore the status of teaching ESP at the University of ORAN1 – Ahmed BEN BELLA – in the department of Computer Sciences, with reference to first year students. This population was composed of 147 learners (male and female) and five teachers who actively participated in this study. To probe more thoroughly this situation, the researchers have carried out a case study as a possible educational approach to accumulate valuable information through the utilization of diverse tools such as questionnaire, interview, and observation in order to reveal the most identified problems encountered during the ESP teaching/learning process in this institution.

Methodology Design

The teaching of ESP in the department of Computer Sciences has long been a problematic task. It seems to be hampered by some pedagogical and organizational barriers which prevent the effective teaching of English, for instance, the teachers’ lack of training as language/ESP teachers, an absence of peer-coaching which may provide good opportunities for teachers to look at their teaching practices and to develop potential solutions.

As a remedial action, this study aims to address the following question:

- How is it possible to ameliorate the teaching of English in department of Computer Sciences at the University of ORAN1?

The authors propound a reconsideration of the entire teaching process with more focus on the learner’s needs and the design of a more relevant syllabus that satisfies the student’s demands.

To better depict the situation as it occurs in its natural environment, a case study approach was opted for. This powerful process provides suitable answers to an array of queries as purported by Yin (2009) who affirms that case studies are preferred in the following circumstances:

- When, how or why questions are being asked.
- When the researcher has little control over events.
- When the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon.

This approach, then, affords the investigator a tool to undertake exhaustive, comprehensible, quantitative and qualitative research.

In order to get the response that is most helpful to the investigation, a questionnaire was given to 147 students (male and female). Given its value as an effective technique for aiding the
teacher get a real view of learner’s needs and what issues should be stressed. In this respect, Richards (2005) discloses:

> Questionnaires are one of the most common instruments used. They are relatively easy to prepare, they can be used with large numbers of subjects, and they obtain information that is relatively easy to tabulate and analyze. They can also be used to elicit information about many different kinds of issues, such as language use, communication difficulties, preferred learning styles, preferred classroom activities, and attitudes and beliefs (p.60).

Considered as one of the ways and required methods to explore the situation, classroom observation is utilised. It provides teachers with constructive feedback aimed to enhance their instructional techniques. It permits the researcher to know a lot about the area under study, to see the target group (computer sciences students) in its natural setting. The good research should be interesting, original, and should use all kinds of observations of specific events to uncover general facts (Mc Donough & Mc Donough, 1997).

In order to assemble data with the purpose of ascertaining and evaluating the quality of instruction as well as to gain a sound knowledge from individuals, informal interviews were conducted with teachers to deeper investigate the encountered issues.

**Findings and Discussion**

This section highlights the major results obtained from this study.

**Learners’ Attitudes Towards English and Increased Desire to Learn it:**

- **The Students’ Questionnaire:**
  - Almost all the learners (97, 28%) showed a positive attitude towards learning English. They insisted on the necessity to reinforce their English courses through written assignments, homework and speaking practices. They also claimed that there exists a huge gap between their current ESP lessons and their immediate needs since a great emphasis is placed on developing the reading skills rather than improving the four language capabilities.
  - From the students’ comments, the following needs can be identified:
    - Writing scientific articles.
    - Leading discussions and debates tightly related to their area of specialism in English and communicating with foreign engineers and specialists in computer sciences at the university, in the workplace and outside Algeria.
    - Defending their vivas (Master and PhD) in English.
    - Attending national and international conferences and lectures in English.
    - Being able to read specialists’ literature, academic journals and all related documents.
    - Having a good control of English due to its desideratum to get relevant job opportunities and for pursuing academic studies.

- **Teachers’ Requirements for Specific Ongoing Training and Improved Teaching Practices:**
  - **Analysis of the Teachers’ Informal Interviews:**
    - The assessment of the teachers’ interview revealed the following aspects:
      - ESP teachers in the department gave elemental importance to the skill of reading to the detriment of the other language skills.
      - The teachers stated that speaking and writing seem to be the domains in which students fail.
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- All instructors noticed that their learners have real difficulties in producing, whether in the written form or the spoken one, simple sentences.
- It should be mentioned that the skill of writing does not receive enough emphasis and this raises a kind of contradiction between the way ESP courses are taught and the way learners are evaluated since writing comes in the first position in tests and exams.
- The interview discloses that computer sciences students are not really given opportunities in their ESP classes to practise English at the oral and written levels.
- The teachers concluded that the use of workbooks and updated articles seems to be vital to increase the learners’ interest in the target language and promote their language aptitudes.
- Teachers complained about the lack of availability of specialised textbooks at the library, the nothingness of relevant teaching materials as well as the inexistence of a suitable syllabus.
- The respondents indicated that the time devoted to ESP courses is far from being sufficient and from reaching the stated objectives that is why they suggested that extra hours are highly required to enhance the teaching/learning situation of English in the department.
- Large class sizes constituted a hard task for the informants and an obstacle that prevented them from easily ensuring their classes.

The Students’ Lack of Involvement in the Learning Process:

- Classroom Observation:
  On the basis of the examination of the data accumulated from class observation, some general statements regarding learners’ needs and ESP practitioners’ practices can be presented:
  - Computer sciences students seem to learn better in a conducive atmosphere.
  - They also desire to learn in a dynamic and autonomous language learning environment.
  - Researchers have observed that pair work and group work are among the learning styles preferred by these students.
  - A considerable number of students perceived that translation exercises are useful for them to improve their English proficiency.
  - It should be highlighted that learners’ attention and enthusiasm are upped when recent notions and latest discoveries related to their area of specialism are incorporated in their lessons.

The Quest for A Fitting Change

The analysis of the results unveiled the non-existence of an appropriate syllabus that suits the learners’ needs in the department of computer sciences. This research showed that in order to meet the changing demands of these specific learners, it is recommended to plan a programme that gives due consideration to the learning objectives followed by the working out of a pertinent curriculum and the construction of special courses that respond to the learners’ academic and vocational attainments. The possible suggestions which may attenuate some of the identified obstacles that computer sciences confront in their ESP courses comprise: the teacher, the learner, and the educational institution.

The Teacher:

The gathered data made known that the targeted students claimed that their ESP instructors have a serious lack of training and awareness of the special field they teach; therefore, the major recommendation should stress an ongoing support and specific training that allows teachers to keep current with the changing technology and classroom practices. The authors view that peer
coaching is a useful professional procedure that aids educators to explore their own teaching methodologies and discuss their own observations. This strategy helps two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another, conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace (Slater & Simmons, 2001).

**The Learner:**
It is acknowledged that the learner has a basic role in guaranteeing the success of the learning experience. Therefore, ESP learners in the department of computer sciences are responsible for paying great attention to the variety of linguistic items they are taught to reinforce their knowledge, and acquire the necessary vocabulary and useful structures that they will use in their studies and later in their working surroundings. Being in an ESP context, these students approach English through an area with which they are already familiar with and that is relevant to them. As a consequence, they are combining subject matter and English language learning. This combination can be a motivating factor which will lead them to take on the responsibility of their own learning and to create indispensable elements which better satisfy their expectations.

**The Educational Institution:**
The department of computer sciences at the University of ORAN1 is an academic institution dedicated to education where officials, teachers and students interact with each other to produce effective change. This notion is well echoed by Morris (1994):

Schools are organizations and they develop a culture, ethos or environment which may be favorable or unfavorable to encouraging change and the implementation of innovations. A school with a relatively open climate, where the teachers collaborate with each other and where the principal and [senior teachers] are supportive of teachers, is more likely to try to implement a change (p.109).

ESP teachers claim that in this establishment the administration does not provide them with necessary and suitable materials and the encouraging conditions they need. It is also noticed from the gathered data that within this department the climate does not support innovation and there seems that little collegiality is observed, and no firm commitment to the university is shown. In order to enhance teacher development and learning standards in this department, university officials are recommended to encourage teachers to be more creative, raise their awareness, and promote their training and teaching circumstances.

**Conclusion**
On the basis of this study, it should be mentioned that there is no dubiety that the teaching of ESP in the department of computer sciences is not really well secured in respect to its vital importance and necessity for the learners to succeed in their field of speciality. The authors believe that the key foundation for students’ accomplishments in English starts in middle and secondary school, and then must be nurtured and bolstered throughout university. The need for continuing training, the design of a convenient syllabus, a readjustment of teaching methods and classroom practices, a building of a real trust and assistance between teachers, and the establishment of a supportive classroom atmosphere are among the possible proposed remedies to the current encountered difficulties faced by teachers who ensure ESP courses.
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References


The Principles of Economy in Word-Formation in Functional Styles of English

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Abstract.
The article is devoted to studying the principles of the language economy of modern English word-forming. The most productive ways of word-formation are highlighted, illustrating the tendency of the language to compress nominative units. In the system of English word-formation, the most effective ways to save speech are affixal word formation, word composition, and conversion. Due to the considerable potential of these methods of word formation, the vocabulary of the English language has such qualities as the richness of vocabulary, functionality, and economy. The main aim of the study is to consider the principles of word-formation in the modern English language through word-formation models represented by the concepts of length and depth of the generating word. The authors of the article explore the mechanism of the principle of the economy through the consideration of the ideas of "mental energy", "word-forming energy", and “pronouncing energy”. There are issues that attempt to answer; how does the principle of economy work in the English language – its word formation? What are the significant models of word formation in modern English? The findings indicate that there are active processes in the word-formation of the English language, which can cause the formation of new words without changing the length and depth of the generating term expanding the possibilities of word composition and conversion.

Keywords: abbreviation, acronyms, economy, English language, functional styles, mental energy, morpheme, phoneme, principle, pronouncing energy, speech economy, word-formation, word-forming energy

Introduction

Despite the variety of names, the essence of language economy is as follows: it is a universal category inherent in all languages of the world, characterized by the desire to avoid high physiological and psychological costs in speech production and manifested at all levels of the language system.

The problematic nature of the study of language economy consists mainly in the uncertainty of its status and the mechanism of influence on the language system. Many linguists have studied the problem of language economy in their researches and works, and their attitude to it is not always the same. Some recognize it as the leading law of language development Martine (2009), Zipf (1949), while others believe that economy occur in language. Still, not all changes occurring in the language system explained by this law Zipf (1949), de Saussure (2013), Sepir (2007), Koseriu(1992), and still, others deny the role of the economy in the development and functioning of language Schleicher (1860), Budagov(1977). The concept of economy is closely related to the idea of redundancy. The redundancy of a language expression is that more language resources are used to transmit the primary meaning than it is necessary. Nevertheless, it seems possible to consider that the principles of economy and redundancy are not directly opposed but rather complement each other.

The relevance includes the fact that language economy is today one of the most active processes that influence the development of the English language, its driving force, operating with a wide variety of techniques and units at the lexical and syntactic levels of the language system. In many cases, we are talking about neological formations in English word-forming that acquire stability over time. However, the problem of language economy in modern English has not yet received comprehensive coverage in either domestic or foreign linguistics (Goipova, Gofurov, Qodirov 2020 Yi Xu, Santitham Prom-on 2019).

Many questions related to the study of the mechanisms of the process of abbreviation, elliptization, and the existence of various types of abbreviated structures, their status, and their role in the system of the modern English language, continue to remain unresolved. Also, we can say about the peculiarities of their spelling and, phonetic design, grammatical characteristics and the possibilities of the formation of derivatives.

In connection with the preceding, the topic of this article, devoted to the study and analysis of the English texts, which manifest the principle of economy, leading to a reduction in the mental stress of communicants, is relevant. And it is essential from the point of view of the scientific and practical significance of the problem. The purpose of this article is how the principles of the economy work in the English language – in its word formation.

The hypothesis of this study is the assumption that in the English language, the effect of the law of linguistic economy at the lexical and syntactic levels manifests in the formation of various types of abbreviated units. They have unique semantic, structural, and functional characteristics, which leads to their high productivity, reproducibility, recognizability. The following methods of scientific research used in the investigation: the practice of continuous sampling in collecting actual language material, the descriptive and distributive practice of
linguistic analysis, the practice of component analysis, the method of contextual analysis, the quantitative approach.

Literature Review

The economic structure of the language, which permeates its entire system, is striking even to the linguistically untrained observer. Many linguists have repeatedly noted this property. The semantic structure of the word results in the compactness and economy of speech. Implications have a more significant amount of information contained in the semantic system than words have.

Martine (2009) put forward the principle of the economy as the basis of his linguistic description, based on the fact that the constant contradiction between the needs of human communication and his desire to minimize his mental and physical action considers as the driving force of language changes. Here, as in many other cases, human behavior is subject to the law of least effort. The person is wasting their strength only to the extent necessary to achieve a particular goal.

Zvyagintsev (1972) criticized Martinet for his unique approach to the principle of language economy. He believed that some techniques to the study of certain language phenomena deserve special attention. Still, not all of them can provide a comprehensive description of the language in all its aspects.

The issue of saving speech efforts considers in the works of Zipf (1949), who studied speech as a natural environment for the manifestation of economy, as an aspect of communicative behavior that governs the principle of speech economy. The researcher, Vandries (1939), describes speech economy within the phonetic and phonological changes. The language economy has traditionally worked at the phonological level. Vandries also believed that it could also work at the level of words and syntax.

The famous English linguist Sweet (2015) justifies the use of speech economy as idleness and inertia of the speaker, and then he identifies two trends in the economy; the omission of redundant sounds and the ease of transition from one sound to another, which leads to the fusion and assimilation of sounds.

Leopold (1930) argues on the question of the economy of speech that the tendency to clarity encourages the speaker to strive to be understood. Still, the innate tendency of man given by nature to save any of his efforts: physical and moral, and in particular in language, leads to the economy of speech.

Tauli (1958), who strongly influenced the views of Martinet, put forward the position of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic economy. He believes that language evolution can determine five driving forces: (1) the tendency to clarity, (2) the tendency to simplicity and economy of effort, (3) the emotional impulse, (4) the aesthetic tendency, (5) the social impulse.
The Kazakh linguists Amrenov, Tekzhanov, Omarov (2013a) considered the economy’s performance in syntactic constructions. Kazakh linguists advanced the idea of complication of the sentence in the plane of semantics and reduction of the structure of the clause (2013b); also, it covered the problem of compression of the syntactical unit in work by Saurbayev (2013c).

The concept of “Word-Forming Energy”, further (WFE) should consist of two inseparable parts that reflect the dialectical unity of the two sides of the word – it is the meaning (the plane of content), and it is the sound complex (the plane of expression). The first of these parts can represent a certain amount of mental (mental) energy further (ME) expended by the speaker to set the meaning of a word by identifying the minimum semantic units that make up it, i.e., morphemes. The amount of mental energy expended by the speaker for this process is the first component, “Word-Forming Energy”, further (WFE). It is natural to conclude that this amount of ME depends on the number of morphemes in the word or, using the term proposed by Moskovich (1969), on the depth of the word.

The second part of the concept of WFE, respectively, can be represented as a certain amount of pronouncing (physical) energy further (PE), spent by the speaker on the articulation of the word in words. Since, according to the assumption of Stepanov (1966), for the speaker, the minimum unit of speech is a syllable and not a separate phoneme. Again, it is natural to assume that the amount of pronouncing energy (PE) depends on the number of syllables in a word, i.e., on its length. Thus, WFE=ME+PE.

For this work, (Moskovich 1969) conclusions are very crucial. First, the maxima of the length and depth of words in natural languages coincide with the amount of human RAM (Random Access Memory) and do not exceed 7±2 morphemes and syllables in support of Yngve's (1966), hypothesis. Second, when using a language in all its functions, there is a consistent tendency to avoid exceeding these maxima and use words of optimal size.

Methods
The main principle of the study is synchronic, which is implemented in synthesis with a diachronic approach. In the course of the work, we used the following ways: descriptive research method aimed at empirical research and description of the word-forming process in modern English, the comparative method which used in the study, considers the average depth of a word in the Old English word-forming, the use of the transformational approach is connected with the possibility of certain transformations to identify differences in semantic and syntactic nature between the components of word-forming elements. In the study, we also use component analysis, which is considered a discrete analysis, the competence of which includes: 1) decomposition of lexical meaning into semes; 2) their matrix description; 3) opposition of the semantic level to the linguistic one.

Findings
An optimal word should have a root morpheme (R0) to identify a language as a means of communication for expressing a real meaning, a derivational morpheme (D) for describing a lexical-grammatical sense, and a relational morpheme (R) for representing the syntactic relations
of a word given with other words and sentences. Thus, the optimal word structure for any language should look like this:

\[ R^0 + D + R^1 \]

As you know, the relational morpheme is not characteristic of English words, and the optimal structure of the English word should be recognized as a two-part \( R^0 + D \) model, that is, a two-morpheme formation, which is most often two-syllable.

However, according to the data of Greenberg (1960), the average depth of the English word in speech is 1.68 morphemes, and the average length, according to Fuchs (1957) - 1.351 syllables (in frequency, monosyllabic words take the first place -70%, the second two-syllable words-20%).

Therefore, the average depth and length of a modern English word in speech is less than the optimal model, i.e., they are economical.

If we compare the average depth of a word in Old English, according to Greenberg (1960, p. 68), it is 2.12 morphemes. Its average depth in a modern English word will be significantly lower than in the compared language. It allows us to conclude that in English word-formation for several centuries, there is a pronouncing tendency to reduce the depth. The length of the word, that is, to save word-forming energy. It is primarily the result of the loss of inflections (Old Eng. word *drincan* → Middle Eng. word *drinen* → in Modern Eng. word *drink*), as well as the assimilation of borrowed words by analogy with the original model (French word *crier* Eng. *cry*), simplification (Old Eng. *hlāf weard* → in Middle Eng. *hlǣford* → in Modern Eng. *lord*), and other processes in terms of diachrony. However, its manifestation considers in terms of synchrony, namely, in the action of some word-forming processes in the modern English language, which helps us create new economic words. First, of course, it is necessary to consider those processes in which the formation of a derived word is accompanied by a quantitative reduction, i.e., a reduction in the length and depth of the generating term and, accordingly, a cost reduction (WFE).

1. Abbreviation, or reduction, for example:
   
   to dub (a film) ← to double,
   lube ← lubricant,
   pop ← popular
   fam ← family

Abbreviated words in English tend to appear primarily in conversational styles, from literary colloquial to jargon. The result from the high frequency of use of the complete polysyllabic prototype and the associated natural desire of the speaker to save their efforts. Acronyms and compound words arise in newspaper-journalistic, military, and scientific-technical styles also as a result of high frequency, penetrating from them into other styles.

It should note that since the depth and length of words in English do not coincide, the resulting shortening of the size of the generating word often leaves a deformed morpheme, for example:
The Principles of Economy in Word

Zhurkenovich, Kozhamuratkyzy, Khatipovna, Tasbulatovna, & Aisovich

1. Word shortening

to double - one morpheme and two syllables;
to dub - one syllable and a deformed morpheme;
popular - three syllables and two morphemes;
pop - one syllable and a deformed morpheme;

2. Reverse word-formation, conversion the linguistic basis of which is the law of analogy. For example:

To edit ← editor
To enthuse ← enthusiasm
To chauff ← chauffeur (French borrowing)

In these cases, verb formation is the result of assimilation of the originally borrowed noun, the structure of which is reinterpreted by analogy with the existing model, and the final part of the root word motivated as a word-forming suffix is rejected. As a result, the length is reduced, and the depth of the generating word is deformed.

More numerous in modern English are cases of the reverse formation of verbs from complex nouns of the type N+N, where the second base derived, for example:

to baby ← to baby-sit
to blood ← transfuse blood transfusion

In these cases, the reverse word-formation results from a false analogy with the homonymous parasynthetic model (N+N)+er. For example: a first-nighter.

As a result, both the length and depth of the original word reduced, but unlike the previous cases, morpheme deformation does not occur:

a baby-sitter – four syllables and three morphemes;
to baby-sit – three syllables and two morphemes;
blood-transfusion – four syllables and four morphemes;
to blood-transfusion – three syllables and three morphemes.

3. Word-compounding:
a best-seller, a crash-helmet;
war-damaged; factory-packed, etc.

Complex words are compressed phrases, and their economy is shown in their whole-formedness in comparison with the separate-formedness of phrases, for example:
a best-seller – a book that sells best,
war-damaged – damaged during the war.

However, the economy of the compound word is not uniformly preferable to all functional styles. In the style of scientific prose, for example, in most languages, including English and Russian, they avoid compressing all the morphemes that express a scientific concept in one word, and the central unit becomes a phrase. For example: in English-end dump body in Russian-a dump truck tipping over backward, and in German Hinterkipperaufbau following the productivity in all German styles of the corresponding models of complex and super-complex words.
It is interesting to trace from the point of view of the principle of the economy the further development of the term-phrase: because of the high frequency of its use, it is reduced, turning into an abbreviation, and sometimes into a quasi-word:

- **NATO** – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- **Radar** – radio detection and ranging, jato – get-assisted take-off, etc.

4. Insert word-formation (Blending):

- cinerama = cine (ma) + (pano)rama,
- walkathon = walk(mar)athon,
- transistor – trans(fer) + (re)sistor, etc.

It is interesting to note that the elements that make up such words consider are not morphemes but only fragments of the two derived words. In recent years, inserts have become widely used in the scientific and technical style as a means of more economical expression of complex content:

- *transistor, composition, metaplastic, etc.*

The inserts in the American journalistic style acquire a particular stylistic color, often as a means of irony, for example:

- **Republicrat** (a person who votes for Republicans, then for Democrats):
- **salariat** (low-paid employees);
- **paytriotism** (patriotism for selfish purposes).

5. Substantiation in (conjunction with the ellipse):

- a postal ← a postal order,
- finals ← final examinations, etc.

As a result of frequent use, the second element of the phrase (noun) disappears, and the first (adjective) takes on nominative functions.

All the five cases of WFP savings discussed above, illustrates the reduction of the cost of PE. At the same time, the identification of a derived word requires a large number of ME in comparison with the generating word, since each newly formed word is larger than the generating word, in terms of the number of steps or cycles of generation (according to the applicative model of Shaumyan):

- to double (R1R3O) ← to dub (R1R1 R3O),
- editor (R2O) ← to edit (R1R2O),
- postal order (R3 R2O+R2O)← postal (R2R3R2O).

This conclusion is in full accordance with the law of conservation and transformation of energy, according to which, when a certain amount of one point disappears, a certain amount of another energy appears in its place: 

\[ WFE_2 = (PE_2 < PE_1) + (ME_2 > ME_1). \] (1) The next group of word-forming processes, in which the effect of the principle of economy observed consists of processes resulting from a new derived word formed without any external changes, i.e., without changing the length and depth of the generating word.

1. Conversion rate:
Conversion allows you to denote in one word what otherwise in the language can express as a whole phrase. In our opinion, these examples illustrate the economy in the word-forming process: *to treat favorably or to treat with favor*.  
2. Semantic word-formation, which results in new meanings of generating words:  
  
- to land on the water,  
- to comb = scour a place, comb a place,  
- disk = a gramophone record,  
- façade = outward appearance,  
- to freeze = to stabilize (wages, etc.)

In word-formation during conversion, as in the semantic plane, word-forming processes can cause the formation of new words without changing the length and depth of the generating term with an unexpressed derivative, but only with an increase in the number of generation cycles:  
- a fault (R2O) to fault (R1R2O),  
- to freeze - 1×(R1O), ← 2×(R1R1O)  
(one syllable and one morpheme, but two bars of the word generator).

In these cases, the WFE is spent only on identifying the new meaning of the derived word and not on its additional articulation in comparison with the generating word:  
\[
WFE2 = (PE2=PE1) + (ME2-ME1).
\]

Discussion

When discussing the law of economy, linguists often use the phrase “language cancels something”, “Language gets rid of something”, “language strives to get rid of something”, “language tries to escape of ponderous speech structures”, etc. Of course, language itself as a system of signs does not have its own will and purpose.

It is the speakers themselves who unconsciously strive to reduce the necessary minimum in communication – and the forces that are spent on the pronunciation-speech effort, speech energy, and the time it takes to transmit certain information.

The law of saving speech time, especially in a conversational style, has situational and social limitations. Therefore, it often causes severe complaints from the zealots of the purity of the literary norm.

But the law of saving language resources is the most controversial among linguists. Indeed, according to this law, many languages have "extra" grammatical categories and forms, such, for example, from the point of view of some linguists, the category of gender, since gender in modern languages does not have its semantics. But does this mean that the so-called "genderless" languages, such as English, Armenian, and Turkic, are better and more economical than
languages with a developed category of genders, such as Russian, German, and others? Is it even acceptable to measure the optimality of the language system from the perspective of another language? Taking into consideration the precariousness of such statements, Russian linguist Budagov seriously criticized the law of economy.

The principle of economy is universal because it acts as one of the main reasons for changes in all languages. This principle also manifests its versatile role from the perspective. Namely, it finds its expression at all levels of the language system. The means of implementing this principle at each level have their specifics and are considered separately.

The conducted research allowed us to identify the main word-forming models of the English language. It results in affixal formations, which have the most significant productivity in all parts of speech since they have passed a long way of historical development. Such methods as word derivation and word composition give the main number of newly formed words. The study of effective practices of making new terms will contribute more to the identification of external and internal laws, as well as trends in the development of the word-forming process.

Word-forming methods and means have different activities. Currently, conversion formations are the most active in the creation of new words.

The ability to build and understand derived units leads to a genuine knowledge of the language, fluency in constructions not only of the syntactic but also of the morphological level.

The economy in the structuring of the language system is one of the linguistic laws based on which all languages work. However, the differences between them are expressed in one or another way. Such a universal law cannot without reason be considered one of the most general linguistic universals applicable to any language, as well as to any of its aspects.

Language development and functioning are regulated by various processes occurring in the language, but the degree of their distribution is different. Some of them are universal—they appear in all or almost all languages, while others have a national character. One of the universal processes of this kind can represent a language economy.

In modern word-formation, there is a tendency to move from statics – how ready-made words constructed to dynamics – how they formed, what means and prerequisites are available for this. Comparing the obtained two series of formulas, we can draw the following conclusions:

For identifying a new word, no matter how it works, a large amount of ME is always spent than what was required for the title of the generating word since each new word has a new meaning.

The economy of WFE in the formation of new words with the help of abbreviation, reverse, and insertion methods of word-formation, substantiation, conversion, and semantic word-formation, only PE should take into account. The amount of PE either decreases (to dub to
double) when forming a new word or remains unchanged in cases of unspoken derivation (to favor ← a favor).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to reveal and describe word-formation as fully and comprehensively as possible through the prism of the principle of linguistic economy, which brings to life particular linguistic processes and phenomena. The enrichment of the vocabulary of any language depends on the extralinguistic conditions in which it functions and develops. The development of the language is constantly improving, and words and phrases are undergoing semantic changes. Words change into a different lexical and grammatical category, changing and rethinking the meaning of words.

Changes in the meaning of words lead to a change in the function of the word, to the making of new words with the help of existing words and with the word-forming means: abbreviation, or reduction, conversion, blending, word-compounding, substantivization. In every living language, the process of replenishing it with new words never stops. They are created by word-formation accordingly.

The language characterized by the desire to save speech resources, which provides informational compression, gives information succinctly through a compressed structure. The law of language economy considers as one of the primary laws of language development, and it is universal because of it is present at every level of the language system.

Depending on this, the principle of economy of speech is implemented through different specific means, and the result for all is the economy of speech effort, time for pronouncing and transmitting the message. One of the principles of language economy realized through the word-formation, which causes active processes in the development of the word-stock under intensifying communications in modern English.

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**References**


Brain Hemisphericity and Saudi Students’ EFL Reading Comprehension

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Abstract
The present study is concerned with the relationship between brain hemisphericity and the reading comprehension of adult Saudi EFL learners. The tendency to rely on one side of the brain over the other can affect the degree of success in learning a foreign language as well as the appropriateness of learning and teaching strategies. A total of 122 Saudi university-level participants were included in the study. The first part of the study examines whether or not there are significant differences between the performance of right-brained learners, left-brained learners, whole-brained learners favoring right mode, and whole-brained learners favoring left mode in an EFL reading comprehension test. The EFL reading comprehension includes main idea questions, inferential questions, literal-meaning questions and text-bound questions. The Hemispheric Mode Indicator® is used to determine hemispheric preference of the participants. Findings revealed significant superiority of the performance of left-brained learners over right-brained learners and whole-brained learners favoring right mode. This result suggests that even in a foreign language learned after childhood, the left-hemisphere seems to control brain activities dealing with language. In the second part of the study, participants were trained to use a visual tool (Mind Mapping®) to summarize the information of the reading passage before answering a parallel reading comprehension test. Whole-brained learners favoring right mode, and right-brained learners were the two groups who benefited the most from the visual tool. This result was expected since the visual tool activates some right hemispheric functions. It is concluded that learners with different modes of hemisphericity learn in different ways.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, hemisphericity, hemispheric dominance, individual differences, reading comprehension

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Introduction

The concept of hemisphericity, sometimes called laterality, hemispheric dominance or hemisity, refers to the general tendency of individuals to rely on one of the brain hemispheres and its functioning mode more than the other (Bogen, 1975; McCarthy, 1978). Accordingly, it is possible to classify individuals as right-brained oriented, left-brained oriented, or whole-brained oriented persons. Even whole-brained individuals, though adept at using skills of both hemispheres adequately, usually show a slight preference for using one of the hemispheres over the other. They can be classified into whole-brained favoring right mode, whole-brained, and whole-brained favoring left mode (McCarthy & Germain, 1993). Hemisphericity is argued to be the general determiner of many personality traits, thinking modes, learning styles, personality types, social behavior, etc. Recently, neurologists (Morton & Rafto, 2006; 2010) revealed interesting findings that there are actual, biological brain-structure differences between left and right brain-oriented people. With that discovery, hemisphericity has become a topic worth revisiting.

Main intellectual functions "lateralized" to the right hemisphere are rhythm, music, spatial awareness, depth, synthesis, color, dimension, imagination, recognition of faces in addition to emotions and social abilities. It processes mostly concrete data. The right hemisphere is pragmatically proficient. It creates larger systems of holistic relationships and is adept at organizing data in terms of complex wholes (Riley, 1981). By contrast, the left hemisphere is dominant in mental skills encompassing activities like language, speech output, words, reasoning, logic, abstract data, numbers, sequence, linearity, analysis and lists. It seeks out details and specificity, and is linguistically proficient (Buzan & Buzan, 2003; Chuang, 2006).

The accumulation of research about the brain hemispheres and language has strongly suggested that language is lateralized to the left hemisphere (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2007). Accordingly, left-brained persons are predicted to be more skilled language users. It has been argued that most troubled, less successful readers, actually comprising over 90% of all unsuccessful readers, are right-brained (Croker, Bobell & Wilon, 1995). Things are more complicated if the brain contains more than one independent language system.

Research objectives

The objective of the present study is two-fold. First, it investigates the possible role played by the hemisphericity mode on the level of EFL reading comprehension of university-level Saudi EFL learners. Specifically, it seeks to find out whether there are significant differences in the performance of left-brained learners (LBLs), right-brained learners (RBLs), whole-brained learners (WBLs), whole-brained favoring left mode (WBLM) and whole-brained favoring right mode (WBRM) in an EFL reading comprehension test. EFL reading comprehension levels addressed in the test are the literal and inferential levels. Second, the study assesses the effect of using a visual tool (which hypothetically suits RBLs) on the reading comprehension of learners of different hemispheric modes. The overall reading comprehension level will be considered as well as the specific levels of eliciting the main idea of the text, making inferences, deciding on the literal meaning of words, as well as accurately restating text details.
Research questions
1. Are there statistically significant differences in EFL reading comprehension levels of RBLs, LBLs, WBLs, WBRM learners and WBLM learners?
2. Does the use of a visual tool (a right-brain function) significantly improve the levels of EFL readings of learners with different hemisphericity modes?

Literature Review
With the use of several sophisticated brain imaging techniques and MRI to trace brain activity and assess hemisphericity, the research of the neurologists Morton and Rafto, (2006; 2010) indicated that there are actual brain structure differences between left- and right-brain oriented people. This fact led them to postulate the existence of some sort of Executive System in the brain that is inherently and genetically embedded within either the left or the right hemisphere. They found some neuroanatomical differences in the suggested site of the brain's executive, the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC). With 98% degree of accuracy, the ACC has been found to be 50% thicker on the same brain side as the subject's predetermined hemisphericity. According to the researchers, hemisphericity is responsible for the bias in thinking orientation, behavioral style and personality traits. Left-brained people are more skilled in areas that require left brain participation, like breaking the whole into parts, sequencing, verbalizing and analyzing. On the other hand, right-brained persons see the whole picture, visualize, synthesize, and are sensitive to emotions, beauty and rhythm. Whole-brained are equally adept in right and left brain processes. However, even among whole-brained groups, individuals may differ in exhibiting a slight preference for processing of one side of the brain over the other (Carthy, 1993).

Hemisphericity and language
Generally, left-brained individuals are more skilled in linguistic tasks than right-brained, since language is localized in the left hemisphere. In addition, language is linear, it consists of parts that constitute larger chunks, and it follows regular strict grammatical rules; all of these features suit left-hemisphere processing. Researchers have learned a lot about language and hemispheres by observing the effect of brain damage on language. It has been found that physical damage to the left hemisphere resulted in a dramatic speech loss, or in other words in different types of aphasia (Fromkin, et al., 2007). Phonological, syntactic and semantic linguistic abilities can be severely impaired. When the damage occurs in the right hemisphere, it results in deficiencies in facial recognition, pattern recognition, and some other cognitive abilities. Nevertheless, some researchers found that with injuries in the right hemisphere, some linguistic skills were still affected. The right hemisphere appears to be responsible for constructing a coherent discourse representation, integrating ideas across sentences, identifying main ideas and themes, making inferences, interpreting non-literal data like metaphors and humor and other pragmatic elements (Prat, 2004).

Hemisphericity and foreign language
There is strong scientific evidence that cerebral specialization of bilinguals differs from that of monolinguals (Fromkin et. al., 2007). Findings of previous studies indicated that language in the brain of a bilingual is less localized in the left hemisphere, but rather is available all through both hemispheres. More right brain involvement is found in bilinguals than in monolinguals. This is proved by speculating aphasic bilingual patients who had a trauma in the right
hemisphere. They showed more language impairment than monolinguals suffering from the same damage in the right hemisphere. In addition, those patients suffer from language problems both in the first and second language, which indicated that both languages are distributed all around the two hemispheres.

Learner’s age at the time of acquisition may affect hemispheric specialization of bilinguals. General conclusions show that early bilinguals who acquired the second language before the age of five process language in the left hemisphere, while adult bilinguals who learn the language after puberty show more right brain processing (Williams, 1999). The acquisition stage similarly affects bilingual hemispheric lateralization. During the initial stages of language acquisition, the focus of learners is more on content words than function words and on meaning than form. Accordingly, it can be hypothesized that during these initial stages, the right hemisphere contributes more than the left hemisphere. However, as the learner advances, left brain processes become dominant. The manner of acquisition may be an additional variable that affects hemisphericity. Formal language learning emphasizes the metalinguistic features of that language and draws attention to the structure of the language, while informal acquisition setting is natural and communicative. Thus, in a formal setting, more left brain processes are activated, while in the informal setting there are signs of right brain involvement (Fromkin et al., 2007; Seliger, 1982).

Few empirical studies have been conducted on the effect of hemisphericity on second language/foreign language performance. Douglas (1982) examined EFL proficiency and hemisphericity. He found that learners who perceived themselves to be good language learners performed better in left hemispheric abilities than right hemispheric ones. Against expectation, right hemisphericity seems to positively correlate with performance in grammatical competence, listening comprehension, and overall test score. Participants were Arab and Spanish students learning English in the U.S. The participation of the right hemisphere was noticed in the Arab sample but not the Spanish. The researcher concluded that the differences between the orthographic systems of Arabic and English impacted hemispheric participation. If the two orthographies of the two languages are different, more participation is required from the visual right hemisphere. Overall findings indicate that the right hemisphere is involved in the processing of linguistic data in bilinguals more than it is in monolinguals, particularly for those who learned the second language sometime later than their first language, and for those who learn the second language in an informal setting.

Robertson (2000) investigated the subject of foreign language reading and hemispheric specialization and asserted that more right-brain involvement is manifested during early stages of learning a language. That is especially true for young foreign language learners. Greater participation of the right hemisphere is evidenced when the orthography of the foreign language differs from that of the first language.

From a different point of view, Qi et al. (2014) concluded that there is evidence of the right hemispheric interaction with foreign language learning (specifically Mandarin Chinese). The study examined the relationship between the white matter microstructures in both hemispheres (as measured by diffusion tensor imaging and success in a four-week Mandarin Chinese course among adult English learners. Greater success is noticed among participants who have more
right hemispheric participation rather than left hemispheric interaction. It can be argued, though, that the special Chinese alphabet characters might require more right brain functions. Foreign languages that use phonological writing systems may have different findings.

In a recent study, Qi et al. (2019) similarly discussed the important role of the right hemisphere in the process of foreign language learning. Greater pre-training activation in the right inferior frontal gyrus (IFG) part of the brain to Mandarin speech among English-speaking learners was associated with better Mandarin attainment at the end of the course. After four weeks of learning, learners showed overall increased activation in left IFG and left Superior Parietal Lobule (SPL) to Mandarin speech. Immediate attainment was associated with greater pre-to-post reduction of right IFG activation to Mandarin speech but also greater enhancement of resting-state connectivity between this region and both left IFG and left SPL. These findings suggest that successful holistic foreign language acquisition in human adulthood requires right IFG engagement during initial learning but right IFG disengagement for long-term retention of language skills.

Qi and Legault (2020) found that prior to learning, the neural characteristics of the left hemisphere predict the success particularly of future speech sound learning. Yet higher-level learning was found to be predicted by a more distributed network, including the right hemisphere and bilateral brain structures. The researchers argued that a dynamic bilateral framework involving neural correlates both within and between the two hemispheres underlies the ultimate success of language learning.

The above discussion of previous studies regarding the relationship between hemisphericity and foreign language learning suggests some right hemisphere interaction in the process of learning a foreign language, at least at the initial stages of that process. Bilinguals seem to exhibit more right hemisphere linguistic participation than monolinguals. Yet, the roles of the hemispheres in learning a language are affected by many factors, such as learner's age, learning situation, stage of acquisition, and orthography of the foreign language. The present study attempts to examine these conclusions and to investigate the relationship between hemisphericity and foreign language reading comprehension in a different environment and with speakers of a different first language.

Method

The present study is an experimental one following a quantitative research design. It is divided into two parts. The first part investigates whether or not there are significant differences among EFL learners with different hemisphericity modes in their performance in an EFL reading comprehension test. The second part tests the effect of using a visual learning tool (a mind map) on learners’ performance with different hemisphericity modes in a parallel EFL reading comprehension test, with all other variables sought to be controlled.

Participants

The experimental group of participants consisted of Saudi 61 Arab university-level EFL learners. A control group was needed especially for the second part of the study in order to determine if the change in the performance, if any, is not attributed to some other factor. The control group also consisted of 61 Saudi Arab EFL learners. The assignment of subjects to either
A group was carried out randomly and automatically by a computer program that assigned students to different classes. The students are not assigned to these classes on the basis of any criteria. Moreover, to determine which group will be the experimental group, and which one the control group, a flip of the coin was used to minimize subjective decisions. Participants were all enrolled in Level Two (first year) at the Faculty of English in Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. All of the participants were at their initial stages of learning English as a foreign language; none of them acquired it in their childhood. They were all exposed to English in a formal way inside the classroom. Their ages range from 19 to 22 years. They have completed two independent EFL Reading and Comprehension courses at the university level, and they were registered at their third course at the time of the implementation of the study. Their consent to participate in the study was obtained prior to the implementation of the study.

**Instruments**

In order to determine the participants' hemisphericity mode, the Hemispheric Mode Indicator ® (HMI) has been used. It is a standardized questionnaire developed by McCarthy (1987) and has been used by researchers to determine hemisphericity when brain-imaging and other advanced technological methods are not feasible. Its content and concurrent validity and reliability has been calculated and proven by Lieberman (1986). It is a bi-polar questionnaire consisting of 32 items that are rated on a Likert-type scale. The scoring of the HMI, as explained by McCarthy (1987), classifies participants into five groups; left-brained, right-brained, whole-brained, whole-brained preferring left-mode, and whole-brained preferring right mode. In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding of the questionnaire, it was translated into Arabic. The translation has been validated through back translation by two Arabic-English translation professionals.

EFL reading comprehension has been assessed by the use of two parallel reading comprehension tests adapted from Ou (2006). The two tests (the pretest and the posttest) are based on the principles and guidelines of the TOEFL test. They are specifically designed for EFL learners. All the questions are multiple-choice questions. Both tests consist of five passages (250 to 350 words long) from a variety of academic expository texts with a total of 50 questions each. Questions are classified into four groups. There are main-idea questions that test the reader's understanding of the main idea of the passage, inferential questions that test the participants' ability to understand what the writer implied but did not state, literal meaning questions that required the participants to identify the meaning of a particular word, and text-bound questions which require a restatement of what the writer stated in the passage. The validity and reliability of the tests were established by showing the tests to four professionals and specialists in EFL reading comprehension. A pilot study was also conducted prior to the actual study to reveal any problems or difficulties in the study's instruments.

**Procedures**

*First part of the study*

Participants were grouped into different hemisphericity groups. They took the first version of the EFL reading comprehension test. The mean scores of the different hemisphericity groups were compared to trace any statistical significant difference between them. To examine whether the differences between the performances of different hemisphericity groups are statistically significant, one-way ANOVA is applied to the results.
Second part of the study

During the second part of the study, participants in the experimental group were trained to use the visual tool Mind Mapping® to summarize texts. Mind Mapping was chosen because it suits right brain functions, since it presents information visually in a spatial way, gives a holistic view of the topic, incorporates colors, symbols, associations, and keywords. A program developed by a professional training center was administered to the participants to train them on the use of Mind Mapping. For mastery of the tool, the program was divided into three phases. The first phase lasted for two weeks and its objective was to give the participants the basic, general background knowledge about Mind Mapping® and to prepare them for the training course. As a kind of introduction, they were assigned certain parts of Buzan's and Buzan's (2003) *The Mind Map Book* to read. Those parts included a brief description of the Mind Map, its uses, and how to apply it, along with some visual examples of mind maps. To ensure that participants had read the material, a quiz was administered at the beginning of the second phase.

In the second phase, participants attended a three-day training session. The course was given by a certified trainer in Mind Mapping with a total of 12 training hours. The medium of instruction was Arabic, to ensure participants' understanding of the topic, and to reduce any effect of linguistic ambiguity.

The third phase started after the end of the training course. The instructor of the participants asked the students to compose mind maps after every reading passage they took. Mind maps were collected and handed to the researcher after every class. Figure one shows a sample of the students’ mind maps which summarized information from a reading passage.

*Figure 1.* A mind map composed by one participant to summarize ideas of a reading comprehension text
The posttest was conducted three weeks after the administration of the pretest. Both the experimental and the control group took the posttest. The participants in the experimental group were directed to compose a mind map after reading the passage and before answering any question. They were given some extra time as they required. Their mean scores in the pretest and the posttest were compared to determine any significant difference. A matched, two-tailed t-test is used for that purpose. To eliminate the possible interference of other unobserved variables which can affect the results, the mean scores of the control group in the pretest and posttest are taken into consideration. If the two groups’ performances in the pretests are almost equivalent, any difference in their performance in posttests can be attributed to the variable examined in the study (the use of a visual tool), with all other variables controlled. The pretest and posttest mean scores of the two groups were compared, using the independent t-test formula which is used to compare mean scores of two groups.

**Results of the first part of the study**

The first part of the study answers the following question:

1. Are there statistically significant differences in EFL reading comprehension levels of RBLs, LBLs, WBLs, WBRM learners and WBLM learners?

The following sections provide answers to it.

**The results of the HMI**

The analysis of the results of the HMI indicates that there are 16 left-brained participants, 17 right-brained participants, and a total of 28 whole-brained participants (comprising 45.9% of all participants), including those preferring either mode (Table one).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hemisphericity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Left-brained</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained favoring left</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained favoring right</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-brained</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result is similar to that of Saleh (2001), who found the whole-brained group to be the largest group in her sample. The high number of whole-brained participants can thus be the result of the way the whole-brain group is defined. Saleh (2001) considered the whole-brain group to include whole-brained participants, whole-brained favoring left mode and whole-brained favoring right mode. It seems that it may be more reasonable to treat each group as independent, keeping in mind that the questionnaire depends on conscious, personal reflections that are more absolute than accurate. Accordingly, the results of this study are based on the recognition of each
group as independent. There are 10 participants who are whole-brained favoring left mode, 13 participants who are whole-brained favoring right mode, and five whole-brained participants.

The results of the reading comprehension test

The total mean scores of different hemisphericity groups in the reading comprehension test are presented in Table two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Total mean scores of the hemisphericity groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-brained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained favoring left mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained favoring right mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-brained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was expected, the highest total mean score was obtained by left-brained participants 0.57. This result is similar to many others like Riley's (1981), who found that the highest performance is achieved by left-brained participants. Those are followed by the mean score of the WBLs 0.50. The lowest mean score was that of WBRM 0.41.

In order to test whether the differences in the performance of hemisphericity groups are statistically significant, one-way ANOVA and Tukey HSD formulae were applied to the results. The difference between the performance of left-brained participants on the one hand, and both right-brained participants as well as whole-brained participants favoring right mode, has proved to be statistically significant at the 0.05 alpha level, in favor of left-brained. So, the answer to question one is yes.

Since the literature indicated that the type of questions in the test usually affects the performance of different hemisphericity groups, it is essential at this point to examine the performance of hemisphericity groups in answers to different types of questions. The reading comprehension pretest includes five main-idea questions, 11 inferential questions, 14 literal meaning questions, and 20 text-bound questions. These four types of questions measure the reading comprehension skills of identifying main thought, drawing inferences about the content, understanding word meanings in context, and answering specific text-based questions.

Performance in main idea questions

There are five main idea questions, one for each "untitled" reading passage. The reader has to choose the correct main idea, among some distractor choices that represent either irrelevant ideas or some unimportant ones. Previous research indicated that deciding on the main theme of the passage requires right hemisphere participation. Accordingly, it was expected that right-brained participants would perform better in this type of questions. The results show that all participants, including right-brained, performed the highest in answers to main idea questions, as compared to their performance to other types of questions. The highest mean score was achieved
by left-brained participants while the lowest was that of whole-brained favoring right mode, and right-brained (Table three). Yet, statistical differences between different groups’ mean scores were insignificant.

Table 3. Mean scores of answers to main idea questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main idea</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Left-brained</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained favoring left mode</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained favoring right mode</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-brained</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance in inferential questions

Inferential questions require the reader to draw inferences from the content. Research indicated that it is a right-hemispheric function. However, as is the case with main idea questions, left-brained participants reached the highest mean score in responses to such questions, as is clear in Table 4. The lowest mean score was obtained by RBLs. This result, with previous ones, lends support to the results of Croaker (1995) and Douglas (1982), among others that indicate the general low performance of right-brained participants in different reading tasks. The performance of left-brained participants was significantly higher than RBLs and WRBM in specifically answering these questions.

Table 4. Mean scores of answers to inferential questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inferential</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Left-brained</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained favoring left mode</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained favoring right mode</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-brained</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance in text-bound questions

Text-bound questions are mainly about the details which are stated in the passage. Questions are not about the major ideas in the passage, but rather mainly about the supporting details. The highest percentage of questions in the test are of this type. Focusing on details is a left-hemisphere function as previous research indicated. Left-brained participants, as well as whole-brained, performed the highest in answers to this type of questions. The lowest group was the
whole-brained favoring right mode. It is evident that this group, along with right-brained, score the lowest in other types of questions as well.

Table 5. *Mean scores of answers to text-bound questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text-bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-brained</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favoring left mode</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favoring right mode</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-brained</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance in literal meaning questions

Literal meaning questions require the reader to guess the meaning of a particular word from its context. The reader has to choose the best or closest synonym of the word. Deciding on the meaning of particular words may involve skills of both hemispheres, depending on the word itself, and the amount of integrated information required. Similar to the results of previous questions, left-brained performance is the highest, while the lowest is the performance of whole-brained favoring left-mode.

Table 6. *Mean scores of answers to literal meaning questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literal meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-brained</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favoring left mode</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-brained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favoring right mode</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-brained</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and interpretation of the results of the first part of the study

Overall results indicate that there are actual differences in the EFL reading comprehension performance among different hemisphericity groups. The results point up the superiority of LBLs over other hemisphericity groups in EFL reading comprehension performance, thus supporting the results of many studies in the literature which generally revealed that linguistic tasks are basically a left-brain function (e.g. Fromkin et al., 2007; Douglas, 1981; Riley, 1981). Left-brained participants scored the highest in total test score, and also in answers to all the four types of questions. Such findings contradict the suggestions of Robertson (2000), Qi et al. (2014), Qi et al. (2019) and Qi and Legault (2020) that more right hemisphere participation is noticed in the early stages of learning a second language. Differences between the English
phonological alphabet system and Mandarin Chinese orthography may be responsible for the differences in results between various studies.

The results also show that the lowest EFL reading comprehension performance is scored by WRBM and RBLs. Such a finding is in keeping with many previous ones that indicate the lower level of right-brained individuals performing linguistic tasks (e.g. Croaker, 1995; Carthy, 1993; Douglas, 1981). However, in order to test whether the differences in the performance of hemisphericity groups are statistically significant, one-way ANOVA and Tukey HSD formulae were applied to the results.

The difference between the performance of left-brained participants on the one hand, and both right-brained participants as well as whole-brained participants favoring right mode, has proved to be statistically significant at the 0.05 alpha level, in favor of left-brained. In addition, there were statistically significant differences between these groups in their responses to inferential questions and literal meaning questions. The performance of left-brained participants was significantly higher than RBLs and WRBM in specifically answering these questions. This fact indicates that left-brained participants are more successful in the skills of drawing inferences, and guessing word meanings in context. Nevertheless, some studies (Prat, 2004; Virtue, 2003) revealed that such skills are originally right-brain processes. A possible explanation of this counter-finding is that in a second/foreign language, more left-brain participation is noticed, even in skills that were originally right hemispheric functions. It seems that in initial stages of learning a foreign language, the level of proficiency which is basically related to the left hemisphere predetermines the performance of participants even in right hemispheric skills, such as drawing inferences. The higher level of foreign language proficiency is clearly reflected in responses to literal meaning questions. Left-brained participants' vocabulary could be larger than right-brained, thus allowing them to perform significantly higher in literal meaning questions.

However, differences in the performance of main idea questions between left- and right-brained participants were not statistically significant. The levels of the performance of participants are close. That is because right-brained participants are skilled in eliciting the main idea of a passage. Accordingly, they did not score as low as in other types of questions. It seems that the right hemisphere is responsible for determining main ideas of a reading passage even in the second/foreign language. This result also substantiates the fact that both hemispheres contribute to the processing of language, yet performing different functions.

Although answering text-bound questions seems to activate left hemispheric functions, yet the difference between the performance of hemisphericity groups was not statistically significant. It seems that the low EFL proficiency level of the sample has restricted the performance of even left-brained participants, and did not allow the differences between hemisphericity groups to emerge with sufficient clarity.

It is worth mentioning that the performance of WRBM is evidently closer to that of RBLs than to the performance of WBLs. They can be generally included under the category of RBLs, keeping in mind that this classification is based on the learners' description of themselves, which is more approximate than absolute.
In addition, although the orthographies of Arabic and English are different, this fact did not activate more right-brain processes, although some studies expected the opposite (Douglas, 1982; Roberson, 1983). A possible reason is that the participants are well acquainted with English orthography. They do not spend time in visually figuring out the letters.

Results of the second part of the study
The second part of the study is intended to add evidence for the results of the first part of the study. It investigates the effect of using a visual tool to represent verbal input on the EFL reading comprehension of different hemisphericity groups. It answers the second question of the study which is:
2. Does the use of a visual tool (a right-brain function) significantly improve the levels of EFL readings of learners with different hemisphericity modes?

As illustrated in Table seven, the mean score of the experimental group in the pretest was 0.46, while it reached 0.55 in the posttest. Apparently, there is an increase in the participants' performance in the posttest. However, to ensure the significance of that increase, the paired t-test value was computed. According to the t-distribution table, a value of -4.768 with 60 d. f. is significant (.000) at the 0.05 level. The answer to question two is yes. Overall, the performance of all learners significantly increased after using the visual tool.

Table 7 t-test comparison of the total mean scores of the experimental group in the pretest and posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>-4.768</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To insure that this increase in the performance of the experimental group is because of the use of the visual tool, a comparison with the results of the control group is required. Although the EFL reading comprehension performances of the two groups in the pretest showed no significant differences (Table eight). The t-value 1.945 with d. f. 120 indicates that there is no significant difference (.054) between the performances of the two groups as measured at the 0.05 alpha level. However, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the posttest. The t value is 6.536 is significant (.000) at the 0.05 level. Such significant difference between the performances of the two groups is evidently the result of implementing the visual tool by the experimental group.

Table 8 t-test comparison of mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental pretest</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>1.945</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Brain Hemisphericity and Saudi Students’ EFL Reading

Almanea

In addition, although the orthographies of Arabic and English are different, this fact did not activate more right-brain processes, although some studies expected the opposite (Douglas, 1982; Roberson, 1983). A possible reason is that the participants are well acquainted with English orthography. They do not spend time in visually figuring out the letters.

Results of the second part of the study
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Table 7 t-test comparison of the total mean scores of the experimental group in the pretest and posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>-4.768</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 8 t-test comparison of mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental pretest</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>1.945</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of the second part of the study in different types of questions

Table 9  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental posttest</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>6.536</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control posttest</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table nine shows results that indicate significant differences between the experimental group's EFL reading comprehension performance in the pretest and their performance in the posttest in all the four types of questions. First, the mean score of the answers to the main idea questions in the pretest is 0.76, but it is not as high in the posttest 0.55. After computing the t-test value to examine the significance of the difference 5.103 with 60 d.f., it is shown that the difference is significant (.000) at the 0.05 level, but in favor of the pretest. There is a significant decrease in the experimental group's answers to main idea questions after the use of the visual tool.

However, this is not the case in the performance in other types of EFL reading comprehension questions. The mean score of answers to the inferential questions in the pretest is 0.41, while it reached 0.58 in the posttest. When comparing this increase in the posttest to the increase in answers to other types of questions, it becomes clear that the highest increase after the application of Mind Mapping ® was in the inferential type of questions. To check the
significance of the increase, the same \( t \)-test value was computed and measured in the \( t \)-distribution table, which indicated that the value of -6.079 with 60 d.f. is significant (.000) at the 0.05 alpha level.

Similar methods of analysis were used to examine the significance of the increase in answers to literal meaning questions and to text-bound questions. The mean score of answers to literal meaning questions rose from 0.36 in the pretest to 0.49. The \( t \)-test value applied to the pretest and the posttest is -4.684, which revealed a significant difference (.000) at the 0.05 alpha level between the performance in literal meaning questions in the pretest and that in the posttest, in favor of the posttest. Likewise, the mean score of answers to text-bound questions rose from 0.48 in the pretest, to 0.58 in the posttest. The \( t \)-value -4.348 indicated a significant increase (.000) at the 0.05 alpha level.

It can be generally concluded that the overall EFL reading comprehension performance of the participants in the experimental group significantly increased after the use of the visual tool Mind Mapping to summarize information in the texts. When analyzing the increase against performance in different reading comprehension question types, it has been demonstrated that there were significant increases in responses to inferential, literal meaning, and text-bound questions. The highest increase was in the performance in the inferential type of questions. However, answers to main idea questions displayed a significant decrease rather than an increase in the posttest. The following section analyzes the effect of the visual tool on different hemisphericity groups.

1. Right-brained learners

In order to test the effect of the visual tool on RBLs’ reading comprehension, the matched \( t \)-test statistical procedure was applied to the data. Results show that there are significant differences between the performance of RBLs in the pretest and their performance in the posttest. The total mean score of learners increased from 0.44 in the pretest to 0.58 in the posttest. The \( t \) value -4.762 proved that this increase is significant (.000) on the 0.05 alpha level. Accordingly, the use of Mind Mapping® significantly increased the RBLs' total performance in EFL reading comprehension.

However, when comparing the means of specifically RBLs in main idea questions, it was found that the mean score in the pretest (0.74) was higher than in the posttest (0.56). The \( t \) value 2.433 shows that this difference is significant (.027). Concerning performance of RBLs in the other three types of questions, analysis proved the existence of significant differences between the pretest and the posttest in favor of the posttest. The highest increase of right-brained performance is in inferential type questions with their mean score rising from 0.35 in the pretest to 0.61 in the posttest, followed by answers to text-bound questions which increased from 0.47 to 0.61. The lowest increase, nonetheless, is in the mean score of answers to literal meaning questions, which rose from 0.37 to 0.51.

2. Left-brained learners

Although the mean scores of LBLs increased slightly in the posttest, mainly in the overall scores (from 0.51 to 0.52), inferential questions (from 0.52 to 0.55), literal meaning questions (from 0.42 to 0.43), and text-bound questions (from 0.50 to 0.57), that increase is statistically
insignificant as shown by t-test values. Such a result reveals that the effect of the use of a visual tool on the EFL reading comprehension performance of LBLs was minor. This result is in contrast with the results of the RBLs, which exhibited a significant increase in the posttest. Regarding mean scores of answers to main idea questions, the result is in keeping with its counterpart in RBLs. There was a significant difference (.006) in the mean scores of the LBLs in main idea questions in the pretest and the posttest. That difference is in favor of the pretest.

3. Whole-brained learners favoring right mode

The comparison between means of total scores in the pretest and posttest of WRBM indicated that they increased from 0.41 to 0.54 in the posttest. By applying the t-test statistical procedure, that increase proved to be significant (.000) at the .05 alpha level. Such a result is in keeping with the result of RBLs who showed a significant improvement in the posttest, and is contrary to the result of LBLs, exhibiting an insignificant increase. These significant differences in favor of the posttest in the performance of WRBM are equally found in answers to inferential, literal meaning, and text-bound questions. The largest improvement is noticed in the performance on inferential questions rising from .36 to .59, followed by literal meaning questions, rising from .30 to .51. Text-bound questions similarly increased from .44 to .54. When comparing the mean scores of answers to main idea questions, the result of this group of learners is consistent with the results of RBLs and LBLs which all exhibit a significant decrease in the mean scores of main idea questions in the posttest.

4. Whole-brained learners favoring left mode

By comparing the total mean scores of the pretest .45 and the posttest .59, it is evident that the mean score of WBLM clearly increased in the posttest. However as in the results of the LBLs, that increase is statistically insignificant .076. Therefore, as it is the case in LBLs' performance after using the visual tool, the effect of using mind maps by WBLM on the EFL is slight.

In answers to inferential and text-bound questions, there was a similarly insignificant increase. The scores in literal meaning questions likewise increased from 0.34 in the pretest to 0.53 in the posttest. That increase in this type of questions is significant 0.040 at the 0.05 alpha level. In all the mean scores, although the increase is insignificant, it was nonetheless greater than the increase in the mean scores of LBLs. In addition, like results of previous groups in regard to main idea questions, performance of WBLM decreased in the posttest. Nevertheless, the difference between mean scores of this group of learners in the pretest and in the posttest is insignificant.

5. Whole-brained learners

The comparison between the total mean scores of the whole-brained learners in the pretest 0.50 and in the posttest 0.49 indicate that the performance is almost at the same level in the two tests. There was no significant increase in the posttest. Although there was an increase in the mean scores of answers to inferential questions and to literal meaning questions, that increase was insignificant at the 0.05 alpha level. Concerning text-bound questions and main idea questions, the performance of WBLs was higher in the pretest than in the posttest, although the difference was insignificant.
Discussion of the results of the second part of the study

By comparing the results of the five hemisphericity groups, it can be concluded that the effect of using a visual tool (Mind Mapping®) to aid foreign language reading comprehension is different among various hemisphericity groups. RBLs and WBRM showed a significant increase in the posttest after implementing the visual tool. In both cases, the greatest development is specifically in answers to the inferential type of questions. Inferential questions require the pragmatic skill of drawing an inference, which is a right-hemisphere function. Although there has been an increase in the performance of LBLs and whole-brained learners favoring left mode, that increase was statistically insignificant. The performance of WBLs continued to be of similar levels in the pretest and the posttests.

Overall, the analysis of data showed that using a visual tool and composing a mind map after reading a passage raised the level of comprehension of the material. Such a result is expected, since Mind Mapping® is a brain-based strategy that visually assists the verbally-stated text. Accordingly, this study has confirmed the views of Mento et al. (1999) and Walker (1995), which indicated that allowing hemispheric interplay by using tasks that activate both hemispheres resulted in a significantly better brain response.

This finding shows that visual tools such as Mind Mapping® best suit RBLs and WBRM. It was expected that RBLs would benefit more from Mind Mapping, because it activates many abilities of the right-hemisphere, since it is a visual, spatial, colorful, and holistic strategy. Such a result is in keeping with that of Seng and Yeo (2000) who found RBLs to be the best performers in a spatial ability test. LBLs and WBLM slightly benefited from the strategy, since it activates both hemispheres, but their increase was not as great as that of RBLs and WBRM. The performance of WBLs continued to be at the same level in both the pretest and the posttest, because they are equally adept at using their two hemispheres efficiently.

The analysis of the visual tool’s effect on different reading comprehension skills showed that it developed three of the reading comprehension skills tested in the study, namely drawing inferences about the content, understanding word meanings in context, and answering specific text-based questions.

Mind Mapping® supported the skill of understanding word meanings in context, possibly because learners were able to build their selection of the best synonym on the basis of information summarized and integrated in the mind map. This finding is in agreement with Ou (2006), who found that composing a summary supported the understanding of word meanings in context, since the summary assisted the selection of the most appropriate synonym.

Similarly, the visual tool assisted the skill of answering specific text-based questions since the learner restated the hierarchies of details in the mind map. Relationships between ideas of the text become clearer and visual in the mind map. In addition, details of the text are supported with visual aids which make remembering them and answering questions about them easier. Restating these details of the text supports understanding them, since the reader not only receives them as informational input, but also reproduces them in the mind map. Pan's (2005) and Watson's (2005) comments are in agreement with this finding, as they argued that graphic organizers facilitate locating key ideas in a text and recognizing the text's structure and organization.
However, the largest significant positive effect of the visual tool, as expressed in the analysis of the data, is measured in answers to inferential questions. The tool developed experimental group participants' skill in drawing inferences in the posttest, most probably because it gives a holistic view of the text. The visual, complete, and unified view of the topic easily guided the reader to determine why the writer included some piece of information, and to find or "see" the verbally unstated relationship between the topic as a whole and that specific information. This is not the case in linear reading, where the readers often lose track, and may forget information read before as they proceed. Furthermore, the mind map clarifies the writer's intent to include certain ideas, since in the mind map relationships between the topics' components and their organizations are visually displayed with requisite clarity. In the main, the reader primarily needs this information about the topic, in order to generate and build his/her inference from it. This explanation of the possible reason behind the highest increase in answers to inferential questions is supported by Mason and Just's (2004) finding that drawing an inference requires a sufficient amount of integration of information presented in the text. It is thus no surprise that the use of Mind Mapping®, which synthesizes the information presented in the text, enhanced learners' scores in answers to inferential questions.

The improvement in the participants' skill of drawing an inference after composing a mind map concurs with the conclusions of Prat (2004) and Virtue (2003). Both Prat (2004) and Virtue (2003) found that the right hemisphere participates to a notable degree in drawing an inference. According to Virtue (2003), the right hemisphere activates information and generates possible meanings of the inference, while the left hemisphere is responsible for selecting the appropriate meaning of the inference. Based on their results, the visual tool Mind Mapping®, which activates the right hemispheric abilities, raised the learners' level in answers to inferential questions.

Participants' answers to main idea questions, contrary to expectations, digressed in the EFL reading comprehension posttest. Nevertheless, after checking all of their mind maps, it was found that most of them understood the main idea of the passage, since they drew a central image correctly representing that main idea. Their abilities in representing the main idea in their mind maps are significantly better then their level in answering main idea questions.

It can be noticed that the mean scores of the experimental group in answers to main idea questions in the pretest were the highest among answers to other types of questions. They were far higher than answers to other types of questions. This indicates that the participants' answers to main idea questions were exceptional. The most plausible explanations for this result is that when taking the first test, learners were very enthusiastic and extremely precise, using their full understanding potential to work out answers to the questions. Yet for the posttest, their motivation clearly decreased because they had completed a similar test before. It could be argued that this effect of lack of motivation is clear only in answers to main idea questions because answering these questions requires careful and attentive reading to grasp the topic as a whole. This is not the case in other types of questions, which ask about some specific information in the text without the need for relating ideas to each other.

**Conclusion**

This study investigated the relationship between the phenomenon of hemisphericity and EFL reading comprehension. A general conclusion of the study is that there is an actual role played by
brain hemisphericity affecting the level of EFL reading comprehension. The first part of the study revealed that the performance of LBLs was significantly higher than the performance of RBLs. LBLs scored the highest in answers to different reading comprehension questions; namely main idea questions, inferential questions, literal meaning questions and text-bound questions. The results indicated that with low-proficiency and at early stages of reading in a foreign language, more participation is expected from the left hemisphere of the brain. The study also revealed that the performance of RBLs and WBRM is the lowest among the groups. This result suggests that even in a foreign language learned after childhood, the left hemisphere seems to control brain activities dealing with language.

Results of the second part of the study showed that overall performance of all learners improved with the use of the visual aid. Using a visual tool that suits right hemispheric functions and allows a balance between left and right hemisphere functions generally assisted EFL reading comprehension. The EFL reading comprehension performance of the experimental group significantly increased after the use of Mind Mapping ®. There was no parallel increase in the performance of the control group. This result adds evidence to the efficacy of the visual tool in supporting EFL reading comprehension.

After comparing the performance of different hemisphericity groups, RBLs and WBRM proved to perform significantly higher in the posttest because they benefited from the visual tool. This result was expected since the brain-based tool Mind Mapping ® is a holisic, visual, colorful and spatial tool that activates many right hemispheric functions. Significant improvements in the EFL reading comprehension performance of those learners were evidenced in their answers to inferential, literal meaning, and text-bound questions. Their greatest increase was in their mean scores in answers to inferential questions which require drawing inferences about the text. Drawing inferences and understanding the author’s intent is a pragmatic skill related to the right hemisphere.

Although there has been an increase in the performance of LBLs and whole-brained learners favoring left mode with the use of the visual tool, that increase was statistically insignificant. The performance of WBLs continued to be of similar levels in the pretest and the posttests.

As the study showed, learners with different modes of hemisphericity clearly learn in different ways. The study indicated that methods and practices of learning and teaching a foreign language which tend to concentrate on left-brain processes actually serve to deprive RBLs specifically of the chance to utilize their right-brain skills. A pedagogical implication of the results is to give all learners an opportunity to activate both hemispheres. Balanced brain-based methods and strategies, such as the different visual tools, need to be incorporated in the system of learning and teaching.

There is a need to use a variety of methods and tools, such as brain imaging or MRI, to evaluate the relationship between hemisphericity and EFL reading comprehension and to validate the present study’s findings. It is also recommended for future research to investigate the relationship between brain hemisphericity and EFL among learners of different proficiency levels and with different L1s. Research in these areas may reveal many insightful findings, with beneficial and practical research implications.
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Literary Characters and their Verbal Mimicry through the Prism of Gestalt Analysis

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Abstract
The paper represents a fragment of a multi-year project focused on everyday speech interaction and, particularly, on verbal mechanisms of granting speech efficiency and effectiveness. The introductory statement of the research is more precise the speaker organizes his/her message verbally, the easier it is understood by the listener. Special attention is paid to the methodological approach to verbal identification of literary characters' social strata. The paper also elicits how Gestalt analysis can be successfully applied to different practical linguistic tasks. Hence, the article deals with the advantages of Gestalt, used for unmasking the virtual speaker's social identity and his social status. Besides, a close study of speech situations has revealed some cases when the speaker tries to play a verbal trick on the audience, thus consciously or unconsciously imposing a false image and hiding his/her true identity. The phenomenon of speech imposters, discovered in literary dialogues termed "speech, or verbal mimicry," while the speakers who use such verbal masks are called "mimics." In the presented research, two types of mimicry are distinguished: progressive and regressive speech mimicry. Hence, the characters' speech was analyzed through the prism of his/her actual or imposed social status, which allowed to single out sufficiently reliable syntactic indicators of the speaker's real social profile.

Keywords: Gestalt analysis, literary dialogue, syntactic indicators, verbal/speech mimicry, virtual identity

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Introduction

The research represents a fragment of a multi-year project focused on everyday speech interaction and, particularly, on the inner verbal mechanisms of granting speech efficiency and effectiveness (Fowler, 1991; Lewis, 1997, 2011; van Son, 2003; Prodi, 2010; Bremner, 2015; Drazic, 2016; Morozova & Pozharytska, 2016). The term "effectiveness of interpersonal communication" is understood as the speaker's capability to make a specific mental impact on his/her interlocutor (Mc Farlan, 2004).

People speak to get their ideas and thoughts across, to exchange their emotions and aspirations. It is natural that the better the speaker organizes his/her message verbally, the more likely the latter is to be understood by the listener. Consequently, the more productive results can be obtained from a conversation. In the process of our investigation, it has been noticed that the verbal mechanisms, consciously or subconsciously employed by the speaker, are not only shaped up by the speaker's individuality or physical and psychological state but are also influenced by the personality of the listener. In this paper, verbal communication is understood as a two-way street, a joined cooperation between the speaker and the listener, where different factors, like gender, age, social status, and inner psychological relations between the interlocutors are taken into consideration.

Literature Review

The study of dialogue discourse is concentrated on the internal organization of conversation as a specific role-play, in which its participants take on certain social roles. For example, the Bear from "The Jungle Book" by Kipling (who was teaching a human boy how to survive in the jungle) recommended that his young charge use the following appeal, "We be of one blood, ye and I" as a win-win technique. This "key" to the heart of any inhabitant of the wild is known as "Master words of the jungle." It not only came in handy to Mowgli but also saved his friend Black Panther Bagheera, who had first taken this instruction with significant doubt and only, later on, saw its effectiveness.

The given advice, considered in the light of interpersonal communication, is a humanitarian technique of social adaptation to a particular group or language society. Wodak (2013) stated that a language used in speech and writing is social practice. In fact, "the Master words of the jungle" suggest that one should, consciously or subconsciously, violate certain stereotypes of one's traditional behavior in conversation (conditioned by his/her education, social background, gender, age, nationality, et cetera) to bring one's speech closer to the audience. These considerations allow us to assume that the speaker's social belonging can in most cases be traced through his/her typical individual social speech modifications, i.e., characteristic features lying within the general scope of speech practice but differentiating one social group from another as a shared social habit.

Hall (2011) in his work described the identification of a person as an operation, based on recognition of some common origin or characteristics typical to another person or group. Hence, the concept of identity can be specified as a person's belonging to a particular gender, profession, or age group.
Studying the phenomenon of identity, the research have quite consciously remained within the limits of "social," or rather "educational" strata of the speaking community singled out on general patterns of their speech. Turning to syntax does not mean underestimating any other language level, like vocabulary or phonetics. Still, it is motivated by the fact of there existing direct correlations between the inner mental structures, defining an individual's mindset, and the surface syntactic structures represented in his/her outer speech (Morozova, 2009, 2010, 2013; Wagner, 2010; Rakhlin, 2011; Morrey, 2012; Pozharytska, 2012).

Our previous investigations have given enough ground to interpret syntactic structures employed by the speaker in the process of communication as a reflection of his/her individual cognitive experience and education (Morozova, 2010, 2013, 2015). In contrast to the straightforward way one's vocabulary might characterize one's inner self. One's syntax should give a more subtle, not too easy to imitate clue about one's social status.

**Methods**

The starting point of our research was choosing a suitable language model for studying verbal markers that would permit classifying an individual as a specific social identity, on the one hand and let out his/her efforts to hide it (if necessary), on the other hand.

The current study analyzes virtual literary dialogue taken from modern fiction of different genres written in English. This choice is motivated by the following considerations. First, speaking figuratively, we take literary dialogue as "a still life replica" of a real conversation given by the Author in a definite speech situation. Secondly, this approach seems methodologically valid since it is based on Smith's (1998) "Methodological Diversity" where the Author argues that taken on a sufficiently large scale in terms of the genre and time of its creation, literary dialogue objectively enough manifests typical verbal speech peculiarities of a given society at a certain period.

Syntactic structures as the most abstract lingual code reflect deep cognitive processes, disclosing the speaker's intellectual and psychological potential, and, thus, link up the ways one thinks and speaks. Individual features of personal syntax are not eye- or ear-catching but work on a deeper level of one's perception, involving and reflecting the speaker's personality as a whole. This fact makes syntax practically an ideal field for unmasking the speaker's inner "I," whether it is real or imposed. The microsystem of a literary dialogue discourse, in its turn, objectives all social group norms characteristic of any minor, closed society, representing a group of communicants who can be identified as a specifically organized unity.

The peculiarity of this paper consists in the methodological treatment given to the problem of verbal identification of a literary character's social status. The research is done in the classical traditions of Gestalt analysis and grounds on understanding any linguistic phenomenon as a focused multi-dimensional formation reflected in its Gestalt properties and Gestalt qualities, but still unequal to their total.

The method of Gestalt analysis dates back to the well-known German psychologist Wertheimer (1880–1943), who made a surprising discovery while studying the phenomenon of phantom movement. Any image of a picture of the world, regardless of its simplicity or
complexity, can be contrasted in human consciousness to an integral phenomenon, which the scientist termed "its Gestalt" (Wertheimer, 1923). There is no English equivalent for the German word "Gestalt." However, it can be understood as "a tangible figure or image" (Duden). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary discloses the term 'gestalt' as "a set of things, such as a person's thoughts or experiences, that is considered as a single system that is different from the individual thoughts, experiences, etc. within it" (OALD). To be more precise, "gestalt" is a specific organization of parts building up an organic entity.

Still, in the thirties, another German philosopher, Ehrenfels, suggested analyzing the entity of any object under study through studying its Gestalt projections taken in different aspects of their existence (1890). However, despite the never-ending interest in Gestalt analysis and its promising perspectives for scientific research, only Lakoff introduced this notion into linguistic analysis in his work "Linguistic Gestalt" (1977).

Today, the Gestalt theory, applied alongside the cognitive approach, has become still more popular in different fields of knowledge, like social psychology, individual psychology, Gestalt-consulting, management, et cetera. In "Phenomenology of Dialogues in Gestalt-theory, Mathematics and Logics" (2009), Chesnokov claims that his forty years' career in applying mathematical analysis methods to linguistics convinced him that all the phenomena of human consciousness can be explained only using Gestalt.

The development of cognitive semantics within linguistics, and, indirectly, the "cognitive revolution" in neuroscience and psychology in general (cf. Neisser, 1997), have renewed the scientific community's interest in Gestalt principles and perspectives for linguistics and re-established the Gestalt theory as a productive research methodology.

The process of building a Gestalt of a phenomenon is a dynamic operation, which consists in a consecutive consideration of specific features of the subject in question, and foregrounding the so-called "Pragnanz" (pregnancy), or "significance" of its Gestalt in each of the chosen projections (i.e., in the specific angles of vision on the subject under study). Revealing the Pragnanz of a Gestalt presupposes singling out a hierarchical distribution of the dominant property in the Gestalt figure within each of the Gestalt projections.

At the beginning of the 18th century, Berkeley paved the way for the idea of a three-dimensional nature of the outer world perception by the human mind (1713). Since then, it has been asserted by philosophers that humans perceive the surrounding world as a three-dimensional structure. Purely theoretical initially, this conception has nowadays gained enough objective evidence due to the research done in the field of physics. Grounding upon it, Karch and Randall (2001), and other modern scientists have put forward a theory of a "3D brain," which contributes to explaining of the universe as a three-dimensional space, reflected in human cognition as a three-parameter model of the world. Traditional psychological views on human mentality also support the idea that human takes in the surrounding reality of three-dimensional images (Lundh, 2018). Hence, various investigations of brainwork show that the minimum quantity of projections required for building up a Gestalt of an object under study equals three. It will allow the brain to "complete" the missing parts and form a Gestalt correlating to the phenomenon in question.
Data Collection Procedure

In this study, the advantages of using the Gestalt approach will be argued in linguistic investigations and demonstrate its practical application while unmasking a virtual speaker's social identity. Basing upon a thesis that every separate psycho-mental fragment of human consciousness is characterized by simplicity, completeness, and wholeness (Wertheimer, 1997), such fragments, taken by and large, can be correlated with particular Gestalt formations. To put it differently, our knowledge about an object of reality, its cognition, and hierarchical visualization is contrasted to a certain Gestalt figure, which is, at the level of its mental perception, recognized as a unique entity, clearly outlined against the backdrop of other objects, already familiar to the individual. Thus, a certain speaker's social identity is also built up in his/her audience's minds by taking in his/her speech as a whole, or as a Gestalt.

On the level of mentality, the formation of a specific notion presupposes creating a particular image or figure against the background of other objects. Since essence is manifested in phenomena, a complete Gestalt of the object is conceived through studying its projections. Therefore, the more projections undergo analysis, the more exact and vivid the general image of the construct is. In the process of Gestalt analysis, the 'areal' of the object under study is also taken into consideration. We term 'areal' as a hypothetic textual field where one can see the projected Gestalt object, which, in our case, is literary dialogue.

The authenticity of narration can only be reached by observing the patterns which are realistic and true to life enough for the reader to believe the presented realia. Thus, achieving the effect of immersion, excellent and popular literature is known for, is impossible without its correlation with the real world stereotypes of speech behavior, settled and fixed in the readers' minds. It follows that to be adequately taken in by the reader, a virtual dialogue in fiction has to manifest lingual constructions typical of social and educational backgrounds associated with those of the characters involved in communication.

Interpreting the personages' dialogue and their information exchange, we inevitably face the problem of various ways of information codification in sentences in a given language. It is also quite natural that communicatively loaded syntactic structures, chosen by an individual, are much influenced by his/her social status and education and represent his/her syntax. Warner (1969) singles out three primary social groups in modern society – "the elite," "the middle class," and "the lumpen." Using the suggested terms for socially mapping the personages' speech behavior in the analyzed fiction, we have studied the communicative parties of virtual characters represented in their literary dialogue.

At the first stage of our research, we collected speech samples belonging to different literary characters. Altogether, the corpus of our actual material counts 600 dialogue fragments selected consecutively from modern English-written fiction (about 3,915 average pages). At the next stage of our investigation, all speech parties were classified according to the social model given by Warner (1969). Hence, we conditionally subdivided the literary characters into representatives of "the elite," "the middle class," and "the lumpen." To ensure the validity of the obtained results, we have turned to the methods of mathematical linguistics and calculated the relative mistake, which in all cases did not exceed 8%.
To "the elite" (from French "élite" – "selection, choice, the distinguished"), we refer refined speakers who have got a higher education and belong to the higher levels of society. The rough, declassed, uneducated representatives are symbolically termed "the lumpen." Between the two given social oppositions, there exists a "sandwich" stratum, termed "the middle class" due to its vertical mobility on the social ladder. We must also stress that the social speech types singled out in the current paper, though originating from Warner's social model, pursue only the goal of verbally identifying the speaker's education level. They have nothing to do with the social stratification of the given language society.

Having chosen syntactic complication of speech utterance (formally corresponding to a sentence) and its lineal organization as the profiles of speech samples analysis, we have worked out three types of Gestalt projections, reflecting syntactic peculiarities of the social groups studied. For this purpose, we used Ehrenfels' circles to outline the areal of syntactically different sentences in the characters' speech parties. The terms – simple sentence, compound, and complex sentence, and complicated sentence – are used here in their traditional understanding in linguistics (Morozova, 2009, 2011; Pozharytska, 2012). By the simple sentence, we understand a sentence containing no more than one primary structure of predication (if any). E.g., I saw a dog. The composite sentence has, besides one primary structure of predication, the secondary predication structure, like a syntactic complex, et cetera. E.g., I saw him cross the street. The compound and complex sentences are built up by two or more primary predication structures. E.g., When I turned the corner, I saw a dog. I turned round the corner, and the dog saw me.

Findings

In the paper, Gestalt areals are delineated as circles, where three oriented lines running from their centers are conditionally understood as corresponding to the hypothetical maximum use frequency of the speech pattern and taken as 100 % each. The projection types, presented in Figure one, are built up following the principles of "Ehrenfels circles," reflecting the corresponding use frequency areal of the linguistic phenomenon analyzed. The average use frequency of the interrelated linguistic phenomena is identified by dot-marks on each of the given oriented lines. By joining the dots, one gets a Gestalt figure of the communicant's social speech profile in the given projection of vision. Altogether, based on the minimum number of differential criteria required by human consciousness for capturing the essence of a phenomenon (three different angles of sight), Figure one graphically depicts the syntactic speech profiles of different social strata and their correlations perceived by the human mind.

Structurally, within the elite group (a medium grey line), simple sentences (marked as SiSe in Figure one) make up approximately 56.5 %, complicated sentences (CoSe in Figure one) with them get a share of 20 %, while compound and complex ones (ComSe) count 23.5 % of all speech utterances.

The middle group (a light grey line) is characterised by the average use of simple, complicated, and compound and complex sentences in the following correlation: SiSe = 60 %; CoSe = 12.5 %; ComSe = 27.5 %.
The lumpen group (a black line) demonstrates a considerable increase in their preference for simple sentences (SiSe = 78%). In comparison, compound and complex sentences make up about 13% and complicated sentences are used 9% of all cases correspondingly.

![Figure 1. Social and lingual corpora Gestalt projections onto the structural sentence variability](image)

*Figure 1. Social and lingual corpora Gestalt projections onto the structural sentence variability*

*Examples to illustrate Figure one:*

The examples here are given isolated to illustrate the corresponding formal speech patterns, without any reference to the sentence semantics.

**The elite:**
- SiSe: "I should be leaving," he yawned (Brett).
- CoSe: "I'll make you very well do it!" I was furious (Gatyss).
- ComSe: "See you when I come back on Tuesday" (Christie).

**The middle class:**
- SiSe: "I know it," the Cook sighed (Holt).
- CoSe: "Your late comin' made us worry," Ellie (the maid) looked up at me (Holden).
- ComSe: "I'd wait for you if you came late." Kitty responded to Boss. (Haning)

**The “lumpen”:**
- SiSe: "So you come?"
  - "Reckon so," Billy grinned (Fletcher).
- CoSe: "Letta go, you brute."→ (Let me go) (Fletcher).
- ComSe: "That's jes' wot us be goin' t' tell 'im," Bill said (Gatyss).

**Discussion**

It is easy to see that, despite the general Gestalt center shifting to the simple sentences in all projections (see Figure one), the Gestalts of socially different groups of speakers demonstrate...
different types of Gestalt Pragnanz. With the elite, it tends to complicated sentences, while with the lumpen, it remains within simple surface structures. The middle group demonstrates a certain preference for compound and complex sentences. Thus, a conclusion can be drawn from here that more highly educated virtual speakers are characterized by the use of syntactically complicated constructions and a considerable length of sentence elements. It is noteworthy that highly educated personages demonstrate a preference for complicated and not compound and complex constructions. Such complicated build-ups engage more brainwork and mental capacity for a syntactic hide-away of an extra predication structure on a deeper level of syntax. At the same time, compound and complex sentences represent a concatenation of sentence elements and structures of predication.

The main challenge of the current work turned out to be 185 speech samples that were not typical of the representatives of the social groups the literary characters belonged. A close study of the speech situations and dialogue fragments involving the characters that suddenly switched over to speech constructions traditional for other social speech groups revealed a few interesting facts of a conscious/unconscious verbal trick played by such speakers on their listeners. By using syntactic structures that were not frequent with their group, they changed the essential characteristics of their social standing and imposed a wrong image on their audience. This phenomenon that is researched in the literary dialogue we term "speech or verbal mimicry." The term itself falls back to biology and is chosen to indicate a specific way of adjusting and modeling one's speech with the speaker's wish to create a certain image to pursue his/her communicative goal. In biology, the notion of mimicry (from Greek mimikos – imitative) means the protective adaptation of some species of animals and plants, expressed in their similarity with other animals and plants and also with objects of their environment. It has been revealed that in characters' speech, syntactic changes often come along side other alterations in their vocabulary, pronunciation, speech and social behavior, in general.

In most cases, the verbal mimicry is carried out at a conscious level:
"Don't frit. I can be quite decent. I know how good girls speak and look" (Brown).
"The stripper Maddy assures her new acquaintance that she can speak like a well-bred girl and later on tries her best to pass for one."

The explanation of the fact that conscious mimicry is used so frequently, we see in the speaker's open or unrealized desire to bring his/her message closer to the interlocutor by using the language code typical of the latter. Unaware of his/her personal language code, the speaker, has the idea of the social group the interlocutor is part of, so that kind of social group's speech pattern is imitated to grant a better understanding, on the one hand, and to enhance the speech impact, on the other hand.

Analyzing the "untypical speech utterances" for the type of their verbal adjustment, we have come across two more types of verbal mimicry and now distinguish progressive verbal mimicry (when the speaker tries to imitate a representative of a higher social position or of an overbearing, leading person in this group), and regressive verbal mimicry (when the speaker resorts to speech patterns characteristic of people below his social status or role).
A universally known example of progressive mimicry is Doolittle's speech party in Shaw's "Pygmalion," where the "lumpen" girl imitates the speech of a lady. A similar type of mimicry is observed in Kendrick's novel "The Curse of Set-Ra-Khatep" where the 12-year-old boy Larry, who is even called "Walking Encyclopedia," imitates his history teacher's speech:

Larry paused and then said, "My humbled personality was noticed in the library by the two above-mentioned representatives of Egypt" (Kendrick).

In contrast to that speech behavior, in Ray's novel "The Green Island," the twenty-five-year-old teacher Ann resorts to regressive mimicry, adjusting her speech to the vernacular of teenage bullies: "You all, listen and pitch-brand it on your…! I shall not only cosh your damned conks but the skin you low and dry…" (Ray)

The boys are taken aback by that kind of treatment from a university graduate, lose their "fighting spirit" and disappear.

The essential situation at hand was as follows: Is it possible to find sufficient syntactic markers of calling the bluff of the mimic in the distorted Gestalt of his/her speech?

**Conclusion**

After studying the obtained speech Gestalts of the unmasked mimics, the researcher have come to the following conclusion. We hope to have found sufficiently reliable syntactic indicators of the speaker's real social belonging. These are sentence lineal length and syntactic types of sentence complications. While trying to imitate syntactic speech types of the opposite social group (and it is in most cases an imitated transfer from one of these social layers to the other), both "the elite" and "the lumpen" mimics resort to simplifying or, on the contrary, complicating their utterances by shortening them or increasing their sentence length, correspondingly.

At the same time, a deep insight into their speech Gestalts reveals many interesting regularities. "The elite" mimics imitate "the lumpen" by using the known common vernacular and lineally shortening their utterances. However, in contrast to the true uneducated "lumpen" representatives (who tend to simple sentence structures), educated people start generating lineally short utterances packed with hidden additional predication structures. They reorganize their remarks on the level of their deep sentence structure and make them short but complicated and not simple.

E.g., "Look here, yer lucky dog! Now that I know of your doing all that stuff, I am in business" (Newhouse).

In the example above, a "good" boy imitates the underground style of communication and tries to penetrate the company of street loafers. Nevertheless, he subconsciously uses a gerundial complex, which is not at all typical of the "lumpen" group.

In their turn, "lumpen" speakers, wishing to be taken for upper classes representatives, seek for the ways of complicating their speech parties, and – instead of building up sentences with hidden, secondary predication structures – come up with tagging up additional sentence
elements, or even extra clauses, chained to the main meaningful part of the utterance on the same level of their usual sentence structure organization.

Hence, we believe that the revealed phenomenon of verbal mimicry is a promising field for future investigation and Gestalt practice. Therefore, Gestalt analysis proves to be a useful approach to practical literary and linguistic studies. Capturing different projections of objects under consideration gives a clue to their conceptual essence, which uncovers their hidden, deep core. It highlights their essential Gestalt organizing qualities, thus, illustrating their perception by the human mind.

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Iryna B. Morozova (Doctor of Philology, Full Professor, Odesa Mechnikov National University, Ukraine) was the first in Ukraine to suggest applying the Gestalt theory to linguistic studies. She has authored four monographs, four manuals, altogether 150 papers, among them: Gestalt Analysis as a Means of Language Personality Identification (2013), Handsome is as handsome speaks (2015), Compliments as a specific methodological approach of optimizing the process of teaching foreign languages (2019), etc.

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References


The Role of Language Proficiency in Willingness to Communicate: A Case Study of Saudi EFL Learners

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Abstract
This study’s principal aim revolves around expanding comprehension of the facets affecting people’s readiness to use foreign languages. To achieve that, the study investigates the various elements of verbal interaction between undergraduate English as a Foreign Language learners and their instructors in the classroom. Linguistic skills are of particular interest, especially their connection to learners’ readiness to speak during classes. The research aims to answer the question ‘How does language proficiency affect the willingness to communicate among Saudi EFL students in the classroom?’ Qualitative data was gathered through the implementation of a triangulation strategy that incorporated focus-group discussions and individual interviews. Moreover, the research takes inspiration from the work of MacIntyre (1994) and MacIntyre and Charos (1996), who focused on learners’ readiness to speak as the conceptual basis for their studies. The study shows that learners exhibit an unwillingness to speak in EFL settings due to perceived linguistic inadequacies, a limited lexicon and concerns that they may make mistakes when attempting to speak English, which would, in turn, prompt further misunderstandings. The study concludes with recommendations for further studies in similar institutions to investigate other factors that may influence students’ willingness to communicate.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, language proficiency, willingness to communicate, Saudi EFL learners

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Introduction

The governments of Saudi Arabia as well as its people understand the importance of English and consider it as a source of professional growth that plays a significant role in international trade. Thus, it becomes vital for specialists in this field to examine all aspects of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in order to fill the gaps and promote the levels of fluency.

This study hopes to contribute to such issues by investigating the factors that affect oral communication in EFL classrooms in Saudi higher education. It is hoped to establish the reasons for the oral communication difficulties experienced in EFL classrooms and to look for ways to address these issues in terms of teaching and learning in order to improve the learning experiences of students in EFL courses. It is also hoped that the study becomes valuable for local and regional decision makers and course designers and provides teachers with knowledge about teaching oral communication skills in EFL classrooms.

This study aims to answer one main question and two sub-questions. These questions are as following:

How does language proficiency affect the willingness to communicate among Saudi EFL students in the classroom?

a) How does the lack of vocabulary affect the willingness to communicate in Saudi EFL students in the classroom?

b) How does incorrect pronunciation affect the willingness to communicate in Saudi EFL students in the classroom?

Literature Review

Research into first languages led to the development of the notion of Willingness to Communicate, otherwise known as WTC, in additional languages. The concept of WTC was formulated in response to ongoing communication during the use of native languages in communal environments (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990; McCroskey, 1997). Studies of the willingness to communicate in first languages aid the growth of WTC in utilizing second languages, the usage of which tends to involve more complications than speaking in a native tongue (MacIntyre, D’ornyei, Cl’ement, & Noels, 1998). The conceptual framework of second language WTC, as posited by MacIntyre et al. (1998), expands upon the L1 willingness to communicate model founded by McCroskey and Baer (1985, as cited in MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). The second language framework offers a clarification of the cognitive process involved in L2 interactions and uses a pyramid model to describe speakers’ usage of such languages (MacIntyre et al., 1998). According to MacIntyre et al. (1998) communicating during the second-language acquisition process demonstrates a willingness to use L2 when interacting with others in different scenarios. This framework represents the cognitive activity wherein different elements come together and help speakers in their attempts to interact using second languages.

The WTC framework consists of 12 elements spread over six layers and collected together in two levels: situational variables and individual influences. The former involves different aspects, such as the speaker’s eagerness to communicate with other people, and comprises the first three layers. These elements respond to the unique requirements of any given interaction and demonstrate flexibility because they can be applied in numerous ways and
settings. Meanwhile, the individual variables, as demonstrated by, for example, personal relationships and the speaker’s character, are found in layers four to six and represent a person’s fixed attributes which are applicable as required.

Figure 1. MacIntyre et al.’s (1998) model of variables influencing WTC

One of the model’s variables is state communicative self-confidence, referring to the “overall belief in being able to communicate in L2 in an adaptive and efficient manner” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 551). It is a construct that consists of two dimensions: state anxiety and state perceived competence (Clement, 1986). The former reflects a speaker’s beliefs about their communication ability when engaging in conversation (MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Meanwhile, the latter demonstrates the level of concern experienced by a speaker when using a second language and can stem from different elements or previous experiences that had a detrimental impact on them. Thus, the ability to acquire an additional language and competently use it can be based on different factors, such as an adequate lexicon, fluent speaking skills and linguistic comprehension. Therefore, this study investigated the role of language proficiency in WTC among Saudi learners in English as Foreign Language courses at the university.

Language Proficiency

According to Assulaimani (2019) for the majority of learners, the goal of their attempts to acquire a second language is achieving a level of competence comparable to that of native speakers. During the initial stages of the learning process, many students’ limited linguistic skills prompt a reluctance to engage during English as a Foreign Language classes. Hamouda (2013) found that, in one area of research, approximately 75 per cent of learners believed their lack of
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proficiency impeded their attempts to progress. Additionally, Zhiu (2013) argues that a principal aspect hindering learners’ involvement in the spoken aspect of English classes is their linguistic skill. Concerns over language fluency constitute an area of potential anxiety for EFL students (Thaher, 2005). Limited linguistic skills can manifest themselves in the majority of areas of language acquisition, such as diction and syntax. Research rarely focuses on the latter because meaning can be gleaned during interaction even if speakers make mistakes. However, diction or a limited lexicon can result in engagement issues when speaking, as the next section will illustrate.

According to Hamouda (2013), diction and articulation represent a major area of concern for EFL students. In many cases, pronunciation proves to be the element causing the most issues, which proves to be a further hindrance when attempting to learn the language (Al-Saidat, 2010). Thaher (2005) study shows that students are fearful of receiving criticism if they make any mistakes when attempting to pronounce words or phrases. Furthermore, Hamouda (2013) found that the majority of research subjects expressed concern over their diction abilities, particularly when communicating in front of their classmates. Approximately three-quarters stated they would feel embarrassed if they pronounced something incorrectly and considered the notion to be a cause of anxiety. An additional study by Abu Alyan (2013) focused on the communication concerns experienced by 20 learners majoring in English at university in Gaza. This study revealed that the principal area of concern for learners revolved around pronouncing words incorrectly. From a technical standpoint, word stresses, different types of intonation and pronunciation difficulties can prompt an unwillingness from students to engage in language learning, meaning they stay quiet during lessons and miss the opportunity to improve their skills. Abu Alyan (2013) also found that diction can be a major hindrance for learners attempting to improve their fluency levels.

A limited stock of words can result in low linguistic skills, with students who find themselves in that situation experiencing difficulties when attempting to communicate in a second language. According to Abu Alyan (2013), lexical concerns often represent a major problem for students during the process of acquiring an additional language.

Hamouda (2013) expanded upon this idea by stating that restricted word bases can seriously hinder the learning process and harm learners’ willingness to participate fully in lessons. For instance, not knowing the correct word may leave students anxious when they try to communicate orally in English. Consequently, they hold themselves back and take on a more silent, passive role rather than actively attempting to improve their speaking skills. Rabab’ah (2005) encountered such a situation and confirmed that a principal cause of communication struggles for Arab students learning English centres upon their limited vocabularies. This is particularly true of spoken and written communication and means learners lack the ability to adequately convey their thoughts and feelings. Conversely, having a wide vocabulary and strong comprehension can result in improved linguistic expertise, which, in turn, leaves speakers feeling more confident and prepared to deploy their language skills.

**Methods**

This research used a qualitative approach which afforded the opportunity to acquire in-depth data that otherwise would have been difficult to obtain using a quantitative approach. Both
MacIntyre (1994) and MacIntyre and Charos (1996) informed this study, particularly their viewpoints concerning the adoption of willingness to communicate as a conceptual basis for research.

Participants

Participants were chosen due to having finished numerous course programs over the course of their studies. The research saw the students grouped into five collectives of six individuals, while the individual interviews involved the trio of instructors and two learners.

In terms of sampling, the groups were chosen in a specific manner to acquire the maximum amount of information from limited resources (Creswell, 2008). Thus, the study could focus on different factors, such as the ages or genders of the participants, and create a more thorough information base. Additionally, the use of the opportunity sampling technique during individual interviews underwent consideration following the commencement of the research. Such a technique represents the opportunity to uncover additional elements that could have a potentially important role in the research process.

Thirty-three subjects took part in the research, of whom three were English language instructors and the remainder were third-year undergraduate EFL learners chosen from three English language classes.

Instruments

This study saw information collected via focus group discussions followed by individual interviews. The data-gathering process featured the usage of triangulation, which is a notable strategy incorporating numerous research techniques to evaluate a sole element. Furthermore, such a technique results in greater accuracy thanks to the ability to verify data from numerous perspectives.

Procedures

Due to the instructors’ fluency, they were interviewed in English during the individual interviews. The students were interviewed in Arabic, their first language, in both group and individual settings. This allowed the participants to converse without any of the struggles that could potentially result when speaking a second language. The post-interview transcriptions were translated in English and certified by an individual who was fluent in speaking both Arabic and English.

The focus group discussion lasted between 45 minutes and one hour, while the individual interview typically took between 20 minutes and half an hour. Flexibility during the research process was provided by the use of semi-structured interview. This approach meant the researcher could alter the questions and expand on any particular points based on the content of the interviews. The discussions began with a set of specific questions but evolved into a more conversational setting.

Findings and Discussion

This segment involves an evaluation of the information obtained from the focus groups and the individual interviews during the research process. The information gathered from all the
interviewees was collated and any common thematic points established. Such universal themes include limited vocabularies, diction and articulation concerns and experience of the target language. All of the study’s subjects stated that limited English skills represent a principal reason for learners’ lack of willingness to try and engage or interact during lessons. According to Teacher A (TA), the students’ proficiency in English can cause problems when they attempt to convey a message.

But, I think the problem is their ability, their strength in English...their ability to try to express and communicate their ideas. (Interview with TA)

Teacher T(TT) aligned with this viewpoint and backed the notion that limited English abilities constitute a primary reason for the hindrance of learners’ attempts to fully take part in EFL classes. According to TT, the learners have a low level of English and because they have limited access to programs where they can speak and listen, they encounter barriers that mean they rarely have the chance to improve their linguistic abilities. For instance, they may not have a sufficiently large vocabulary, which, in turn, manifests in restricted use of the English language and subsequent interaction struggles. Although the learners may demonstrate a willingness to engage, they tend to do so in Arabic because of insufficient L2 abilities. Moreover, not enough time is given over to helping expand these skills.

Students’ level is low. In our department, speaking and listening courses are few which is an obstacle for the students as they do not have enough opportunity to participate or to develop their speaking skills. They do not have enough vocabulary to assist them in discussion. This is the major problem they have; the linguistic level is low. We find them willing to participate and interact but their interaction is in Arabic because their English is weak. In addition, the time given for such activities is not enough. (Interview with TT)

Student five (S5) offered an additional interpretation by stating that learners’ prowess in the classroom affects their ability to communicate verbally. Thus, if a learner demonstrates strong linguistic skills, the communication exponentially improves. However, limited oral abilities mean students may hesitate and not engage as fully as they otherwise might.

Students’ academic level has an effect in their oral communication. If the student’s language is good, it will help in that. For me, sometimes I hesitate to participate and communicate orally because of the low language level I have. (Interview with S5)

Numerous studies have supported this notion and dictate that limited English abilities can prove to be a hindrance in terms of communication (Assulamani and Alqurashi, 2021; Zhou, 2016).

**Lack of Vocabulary**

According to Abu Alyan (2013), a strong lexical base and language expertise result in improved oral skills and increased understanding. Thus, learners in possession of a less-thorough vocabulary can experience difficulties when they attempt to express themselves in a second language. From this perspective, an insufficient vocabulary can prompt concerns for students during the second-language acquisition process. This research uncovered a similar viewpoint when one of the instructors stated that such problems lead to students not taking part in lessons. Abu Alyan (2013) found lexical shortcomings can prove harmful and may prompt an
unwillingness by students to engage and interact with other learners or their teachers during classes. This viewpoint was shared by TT, who stated that learners do not have a sufficiently wide vocabulary, with the result being that their language abilities are correspondingly low.

They (students) do not have enough vocabulary items that assist them in discussion. This is the major problem they have; the linguistic level is low. (Interview with TT)

According to S5, learners’ limited vocabularies can result in decreased engagement and interaction during classes, with the upshot being lower academic achievement. Moreover, learners are fearful that they may make pronunciation mistakes, and these fears drive them to participate less. A potential reason for this uncertainty revolves around certain instructors’ teaching styles, which may be detrimental to improving learners’ English language capabilities.

 Based on my experience, I have a problem in my academic level caused by the lack of vocabulary. In addition to the fact that we habitually do not pronounce words correctly the fear of committing errors lessens my participation. It is attributed to the fact that the teacher does not use a suitable teaching style that helps in developing my level. (Interview with S5)

Such concerns were supported by Rabab’ah (2005), who determined that a reason for Arabic students’ communication issues when learning English stems from their often limited vocabularies, which lessens their oral or written skills and hinders their ability to convey what they want to say. According to Hamouda (2013), students’ vocabularies impact their readiness to engage in the learning process: the higher their vocabularies, the more likely they are to interact. Those with less-complete vocabularies can experience anxiety when they try to speak in English, which can leave them sidelined in a more passive listening role.

Lack of vocabulary remains a reason for many students not wanting to participate orally in lessons. In Focus Group one, some of participants expressed this opinion. FG1-1 and FG1-3 respectively said:

One of the things that hinders oral communication in the classroom is not having enough vocabulary items that may facilitate communication with the teacher. (FG1-1)

The things that hinder oral communication in the classroom are fearfulness, shyness, and lack of vocabulary. (FG1-3)

Additionally, a participant in the third focus group found that the use of Arabic in the classroom facilitates deeper interaction than using English. This is because native Arabic speakers can put ideas into words in a way that they might not be able to if they use a second language due to potential lexical and linguistic limitations.

**Incorrect Pronunciation**

Concern over pronouncing words contributes to an unwillingness to engage in EFL classes. During students’ interviews, they shared their fears over being embarrassed in public or criticised by peers if they mispronounced a word during group activities. According to the learners, lower
academic levels can prove detrimental when speakers attempt to communicate in English during classes. Students are rarely afforded the opportunity by teachers to practice their diction and articulation skill, which leads to situations where learners actively step back from participating in oral activities. This reticence stems from the fact that students can be wary of critical reactions or inadequate communication if they mispronounce anything. The result of situations such as these is a lower academic level and the perpetuation of mistakes because students may not put themselves in the position where they are corrected. S4 and S5 said:

What hinders oral communication in English classrooms is the low academic level especially in pronunciation. We are weak in pronunciation because teachers do not give us opportunities to practice the correct pronunciation of words. Many times, I avoid participation and discussion fearing criticism and students’ irony or from miscommunication caused by the incorrect pronunciation of a certain word. (Interview with S4)

Based on my experience, I have a problem in my academic level caused by the lack of vocabulary. This is in addition to the fact that we are in the habit of not pronouncing words correctly … which lessen my participation. (Interview with S5)

The issue of pronunciation is a prevalent one and can impact learners’ participation in learning. Fears over a critical response from peers in case of pronunciation difficulties are a common theme and lead to learners deciding to avoid situations where they might experience communication difficulties. This viewpoint has appeared in different studies, and the feedback provided by the students taking part in the research aligns with the interpretation of Abu Alyan (2013) following an assessment of learners in Palestine studying English. Moreover, Hamouda (2013) study shows that numerous students expressed anxiety about verbal communication, especially in terms of pronouncing words. According to Al-Saidat (2010), pronunciation not only represents a major area of concern for L2 learners but is also the primary issue they face when communicating in English.

The study’s focus group engagements saw comparable sentiments being shared by the participants. For instance, one participant in the third focus group stated that low language skill levels, particularly in terms of pronouncing words, can act as a major obstacle when learning English.

The students’ low academic level, especially in pronunciation, is one of the English oral communication obstacles. (FG3-6)

This anxiety was shared by the second focus group, who shared their fear of criticism resulting from mispronunciations. Such concerns are compounded by the fact that students may belittle those who make mistakes, or learners fear such an event taking place. Limited language abilities can prove a hindrance when learning English, with oral skills particularly suffering.

Some of the things that hinder our oral communication in the classroom include our low academic level in language in general and in speaking skill in particular. That is also, the fear of committing errors in the pronunciation of some words which lead to being made fun of by some students. (FG2-4)
Thus, learners’ willingness to communicate can depend on diction and articulation, with fears over embarrassment or public shaming in case of mispronunciation dictating their involvement in classes. Such concerns can prove to be a significant hindrance to advancing language capabilities and developing overall English skills.

**Conclusion**

The present study focuses on the oral communication difficulties faced by Saudi EFL students in higher education. It investigates oral communication aspects between Saudi EFL students and their teachers in English classrooms. The focus of the study has been on the variables that impact students’ desire to be engaged in communication inside the classroom, so it aimed to find out what encourages them to communicate and what hinders them from doing so. More specifically, this study is an attempt to investigate and establish relationships between variables elicited from the data and Saudi students’ willingness to communicate in English classrooms at university level. This present article focuses on the role of language proficiency in students’ WTC inside the English classroom. For data collection, the researcher used a triangulation method in which focus-group discussions and individual interviews were used.

Based on the analysis of the views presented by the participants, the results of the study revealed that students are unwilling to communicate in English classes because of their low level of language proficiency, not having a good inventory of vocabulary and knowledge, fear of making pronunciation errors, and a fear of being misunderstood because of these errors. This fear seems to be caused by the possible negative reaction of other students. This perspective in line with the views of MacIntyre (1994) and MacIntyre and Charos (1996) on WTC in their argument that communicative self-confidence is a construct that consists of two dimensions: state anxiety and state perceived competence. Finally, this study recommends conducting future studies in similar institutions investigating other factors that may influence students’ WTC to be compared with the findings of this study.

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References


English Linguistic Competencies Formation through Specially Designed Border Guards’ Practical Training

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Abstract
The current study inquires about the cadets’ practical training in their primary positions as interpreters/translators. The research is focused on efficient on-the-job training and its organizational procedures for the competence and competency-based approaches. The aim of the practical training of the cadets who study by Philology specialty is to apply English as a foreign language in service situations concerning language immersion and translating issues in the law-enforcement sphere. Needs analysis conducted by the Foreign Languages Department instructors testified to the great significance of the on-the-job training. The Academy's graduates were interviewed to specify the duties and skills required for their job performance and reveal the gaps in the academic study of the cadets by Philology specialty. For this reason, practical training in linguistics was developed to bring theory and practice together, to improve and foreground the theoretical knowledge through true-to-life task completion. Competencies analysis was made concerning higher education standards by specialty 035 Philology for the first (Bachelor’s) level of higher education established by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, and the relevant ones were selected. Twenty-two cadets of the Academy have undergone practical training in their would-be primary positions. It is expected that the cadets will be provided with relevant experience in the position of an interpreter/translator of the Division of International Cooperation and Border Representative Work and get essential links to the content of the future service. The consequent research will concern the practical training results verification based on their defense presentation assessment.

Keywords: border guard, linguistic competency, practical training, professional competence, interpreter/translator

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Introduction

Studying the theory of learning, as well as mastering the skills of its creative use in practice, is almost the main key to specialists’ effective training in any field, and future border guards are no exception. Therefore, among many didactic principles that determine the content, organizational forms, and methods of the educational process in harmony with its general goals and laws, almost the first is the principle of connecting theory and practice. The learning process should encourage students to test and apply their knowledge in practice, analyze and transform the surrounding reality, use the surrounding reality both as a source of knowledge and a branch of their practical use, and gain their first insight necessary to understand the core attributes of their future career. When it comes to the linguistic competencies formation using problem-based as well as research-based tasks, properly designed practical training should be an effective means of connecting theory and practice. For the simple reason that it best demonstrates the feasibility of the theory, the mechanism of its application, and adjusts the theory of learning. The effectiveness of the formation of linguistic competencies depend on the cadets’ involvement in problem-based interactive learning that is determined by the content, types, forms, and focus of the latter on the features of the future career. On the plus side, the effectiveness of connecting training and practice depends on the content of education, the organization of the educational process, the forms and methods of training used, the time allocated for practical training directly in the Divisions of International Cooperation and Border Representative Work (DICBRW). The more cadets are involved in practical training, the more effective their knowledge is. In precisely this way, knowledge interacts with life. Therefore, the faculty tries to combine cadets’ academic activity with practical training, in the process of which up to 85% of knowledge is absorbed.

Consequently, the academic staff of the Foreign Languages Department worked out the program that specified the organizing procedures of the practical training, including the responsible persons, the competencies to be acquired, the results expected, individual tasks, and the format of their training defense report and evaluation criteria.

English linguistic competency can be defined as the ability to function in true-to-life professionally related communication, including oral and written speech in the line of duty wherever it is required. It makes sense that linguistic competencies must correspond to the professional environment of future border guards. The linguistic competencies of future border guards suggest their ability to provide readily available, culturally appropriate oral and written language services as trained and qualified interpreters/translators in the law-enforcement field. Border guards’ career, more than other professions, requires broad knowledge in many areas, including legal issues, environmental problems, travel documents, world nations, and their cultures, and at least one foreign language.

Globalization's impact on the border guard service is critical, as has been attested by an influx of migrants, international businesses, and tourism recently. Therefore, present-day service requires border guards to be skilled in performing complex tasks in an efficient, vigilant, and cost-effective manner. Knowing a foreign language is often a key to find solutions to a problem.

The purpose of the study is to determine the competencies and learning outcomes that cadets should master during practical training as an interpreter/translator of the DICBRW of the
border guard detachment, as well as the curriculum-stipulated practice results and would-be shortfalls.

The purpose of the study presupposes the following objectives:

Develop a syllabus for practical training of the third year cadets of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine – applicants of the first (Bachelor's) level of Higher Education, by specialty 035 Philology following the Instructions for organizing and conducting practical training for the cadets of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (NASBGS);

Study and cover of organizational measures concerning practical training of NASBGS cadets by specialty 035 Philology;

Develop individual tasks for cadets and instructions on practical training results presentations.

Subsequently, this research is minded to contribute to the existing literature on the subject by answering such questions:

What are the linguistic competencies to be formed through practicing English in their primary positions as interpreters/translators?

What learning outcomes do cadets have to demonstrate after passing training?

**Literature Review**

The modern labor market requires a higher educational institution (university) graduate to be able to use the acquired theoretical knowledge in non-standard situations and situations that are constantly changing. There is a kind of transition from society, in which knowledge is preferred, to one consisting of life-competent citizens. Therefore, the competence and competency-based approach to the provision of educational services in higher education institutions is still relevant and entails the coordination of the content of education and educational technologies with modern needs. It means systematic analysis of the situation at the border and the adjustment of the content of academic subjects following modern requirements of professional activity and the orientation of the syllabuses to the competence and competency-based approach and what is more is the creation of effective mechanisms for its implementation (Omar, et al., 2008).

Nowadays, there is a need to turn to the latest world achievements in the field of the English language. Some scholars revealed the significance of the English language in the self-education of the students of socio-humanitarian specialties. They validated the influence of the English language knowledge on the effectiveness of future specialists’ self-education in the process of fundamentalization of academic learning (Mlynchuk, Rebukha, Zavgorodnia & Bloshchynskyi, 2018). The significance of information and communication technologies usage, namely Anki program during the border guard cadets’ foreign language professional training for state examinations was revealed in the study of Bloshchynskyi (2017).
Other scholars described the use of electronic educational and methodological software packages for improving the preparation of the future border guard officers specializing in Philology (humanities branch) for the first (Bachelor’s) level of higher education for final examinations (Bloshchynskyi, Halus, Pochekalin & Taushan, 2018). The recent relevant study (Karpushyna et al., 2019) gives credence to content-based warming-ups in the English class. The cadets by “Law” specialty at Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine were provided with real-life contexts and settings, and therefore, with adaptable and transferrable skills that they could apply in all areas of the academic and professional life. Interviewing travelers or impostors on the border are among others. The researchers experimented with the interviews based on quasi-professional communication with the second-year cadets employing adopted the NATO Standardization Agreement (STANAG 6001) table of language proficiency levels specifically for the future border guards' language requirements.

Such scholars as I. Melnychuk et al. (2019) revealed the organization of distance learning in the English language by “Nursing” specialty. The study included purpose, tasks, grounds (principles), kinds, forms of distance learning courses taught in English, revealed the reasons for choosing the before-mentioned form of study, and provided organizational, methodological, system, and technical support.

Any practical training can offer indispensable opportunities to learners and introduce them not only to “real life” situations but also to professionals and practitioners. Theall (2012) states that there are many reasons for incorporating real-life situations into the process of education. Many researchers claim that using PBL makes curriculum content relevant as PBL helps focus learning on core information and foster the development of valuable transferrable skills (Ceker, & Ozdamli, 2016; Karpushyna, 2018; Tang, et all., 2020). In addition, the reason for that is evident— professional activity involves different problems that have to be solved by employees: young or experienced. In their days, Makarenko (1973) and Sukhomlinskii (1963) considered labor activity to be a core activity in students' acquisition of professional and life experience. The latter argued that true happiness goes to those who start their working life with the beginning of their studies, and Makarenko claimed that participation in production is irreplaceably crucial. Montessori (2019) stimulated the professional interests of students in the educational process. Their ideas have not yet lost their significance.

Language practice is an integral component of the professional training of cadets studying by the Philology specialty and allows them to gain knowledge and skills required by their future careers.

**Theoretical Analysis of the Problem**

**General Statements**

Practical training has always been an integral part of the educational process at the National Academy of SBGS. As part of the future border guards’ training, the Academy widely uses various forms and types of practice, which allows cadets to become effective specialists in border protection issues during their training. However, until now, cadets studying by specialty 035 Philology did not have a philological-oriented practice. Cadets were sent to border guard detachments for practical training on border control and border surveillance issues. This time,
cadets will be able to apply theoretical knowledge of a foreign language and foreign language skills in real service situations, acquire professional communication skills, make independent decisions based on a specific service situation, and cooperate with border guards of neighboring states using FRONTEX official language – English.

The goal of this practical training is to acquire practical skills while performing the duties of an interpreter/translator of the DICBRW, to study and consolidate knowledge of translation of letters, telegrams, facsimiles, and other documents that come to the border guard detachment from neighboring states, as well as written and oral translation from a foreign language into Ukrainian and vice versa during border-representative meetings, international cooperation events at all levels of the border-representative apparatus of Ukraine, to deepen and re-enforce theoretical knowledge, and therethrough to improve sociolinguistic, cultural, acmeological and translation skills and abilities acquired during the their study at the National Academy.

Thus, the practical training is to involve performing the following tasks:

- Systematization, extension, and consolidation of the acquired knowledge and practical skills by specialty 035 Philology;
- Gaining skills to assess independently and correctly the situation by the service duties and make informed decisions;
- Development of the ability to quickly navigate the state of affairs, problems related to the implementation of control over the accuracy of the translation, which is carried out by an interpreter/translator of a neighboring state during border-representative meetings or international cooperation events;
- Acquisition of practical skills in the position of an interpreter/translator of the DICBRW;
- Advancing translation memory, speech reactivity, psychological stability, sociability, decency, and the ability to “switch” from one language to another as quickly as possible without any delay;
- Development of such moral qualities of an interpreter/translator of the DICBRW: moral will (ability to achieve goals, win the respect of people, self-control); professional dignity (administrational demands, commitment to work); collectivism (organization, sociability); courage (ability to overcome personal and official failures); integrity (respect for the opinions of others, the ability to stand one's ground, etc.);
- Improvement of skills in organizing and conducting measures to promptly communicate to concerned officials of the border guard detachment the content of letters, telegrams, facsimile messages, and other documents received by the border guard detachment from neighboring states;
- Authentication of protocols drawn up based on the results of border representative meetings in the sector of responsibility of the border guard detachment;
- Continuous improvement of their professional level, practicing knowledge of foreign languages demanded by the position;
Study and ongoing improvement of the level of proficiency in the languages of neighboring states and other languages, which allow them to communicate with representatives of other states, use their knowledge of languages while performing service activities;

Performing written and oral translation within the limits of their service duties.

Organizational Measures of Practical Training

The practical training program regulates all issues related to the practice. The DICBRW of the border guard detachment has been chosen as a base of practical training on the ground that it meets the following requirements: compliance with the specialty and type of practice, the field of activity provided for in the program, the availability of qualified personnel to guide the cadets' training.

Two months before the practical training starts, the National Academy sends proposals to the division of professional training and organization of educational activities of the Personnel Department regarding the number of cadets and the list of practical training positions, as well as the terms of its implementation.

The organization of practical training is assigned to the Rector of the National Academy. A month before the practical training starts, based on the State Border Guard Service Administration Decree, the Rector issues the Order On the organization of cadets' practical training. The Order stipulates measures enabling the service placement and positions for the cadets; appoints the head of practical training from the academy (if necessary); sets tasks concerning their duties; specifies the inspection tools, the format of final reports, and the membership of the experts' commission for evaluating after-training results.

The field-oriented department in specialty 035 Philology is the Foreign Languages Department. The academic teaching team develops a program of practical training, educational and methodological materials, taking into account the requirements of the Rector’s Order. The Faculty of Operational and Service Support, as well as the Foreign Languages Department, develop the training realization plan that has to be approved by the Deputy Rector for Academic Affairs. The plan reflects the preparatory period procedures, training activity progress, and the scheme of the on-the-job practice results.

Within the framework of the preparatory period, cadets study the program of practical training; and the Head of the Faculty of Operational and Service Support prepares and submits relevant applications and certificates on practical training logistics.

Following the schedule, the Head of the Faculty and the Head of the Foreign Languages Department conduct instructor-methodical classes with the personnel, carry out organizational measures concerning security measures, mission statement, paperwork, etc.

Before starting practical training, the cadets study their duties and draw up individual plans for the Training (Table one), further approved by the Head of the state border protection body and agreed by the Division and National Academy supervisors.
Table 1. Sample of an individual practical training plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Planned events</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cadet of the ___ course ________________________________,

(first and last name)

who is undertaking practical training in _______________________________

(name of the division)

in the period from ____ ________ to ____ ________ 20___

Cadets’ practical training is carried out on the State Border Protection bodies’ facilities, which are determined after early approval with the Department of Personnel Professional Training and Education, in a position of an interpreter/translator of the DICBRW of the border guard detachment, for thirty days.

During their practical training cadets

− Acquire skills in performing the duties foreseen by the position of the practical training;
− Adhere to the daily routine established in the division and other requirements of the command papers;
− Perform service duties in the position where they undertake practical training and tasks following the training program and their plans;
− Study the specific nature of service in different conditions;
− Systematically collect and summarize the materials specified in the program.

At the end of practical training, cadets of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine draw up written reports on the results of practical training according to the established sample (Table two).

Table 2. Sample report on the results of practical training by a cadet of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last name, first name, patronymic</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Practical Training Goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division, Where Practical Training took place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration of Practical Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Border Protection Body's Order</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results of Practical Training (filled in by the Cadet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Border Protection Body's order from ___________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Briefly indicate the completeness of carrying out the tasks and individual plan, the results obtained, the positive aspects of practical training, the pith and marrow of difficulties and problems that arose during practical training, suggestions for further improvement of the organization and procedure for conducting practical training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations concerning practical training results implementation (filled in by the Head of practical training from the DICBRW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Signature

### Methods

Today's border checks and border surveillance require border guards to be skilled in performing diverse tasks in an efficient manner. A performance improvement tool is needed to prepare future officers for an expected level of performance. Practical training in the would-be positions should be such a tool.

To identify the training needs, content analysis has been performed. It involved analysis of documents, laws, procedures used on the job; moreover, experienced officers (academy’s graduates) and instructors of Border Checks and Border Surveillance Departments were interviewed to determine the service content. The information from Decree on education standards by specialty 035 Philology for the first (Bachelor’s) level of higher education established by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has been counted in order not to conflict or contradict job requirements.

This analysis has given us the conception about what knowledge or information is used on this job and what performance gaps the academy’s graduates have challenged.

### Procedure

Following the purpose of practical training, it is expected that the third year cadets will acquire a variety of practical knowledge, practice their theoretical knowledge, test it out in real-life situations, and get acquainted with challenges as an interpreter/translator. This knowledge includes:

- Purpose, structure, and functions of the DICBRW;
- Job responsibilities, rights, organization of service activities of an interpreter/translator of the DICBRW;
- Regulatory documents governing the interpreter’s/translator’s activities of the DICBRW;
- Composition of Border Representative apparatuses of their own state border protection body and a neighboring state’s one;
- Peculiarities of organizing and conducting border representative meetings, the role and place of an interpreter/translator at them, norms of ethical behavior;
– Requirements for drawing up protocols based on the results of border representative meetings;
– Requirements for the translation of letters, telegrams, facsimile messages, and other documents received by the border guard detachment from the related parties, and the procedure for communicating their content to the parties concerned;
– Translation principles, methods, transformations, and features of their application in the performance of oral and written translations;
– Functional-stylistic and lexical-semantic features of the materials used by the interpreter/translator of the DICBRW;
– Specific border and law enforcement vocabulary, as well as the most commonly used abbreviations that occur in documents and frequently used during international cooperation activities at the level of the border and representative apparatus of the border guard detachment;
– Methods and ways of consecutive translation (paraphrasing, generalizing, extracting, using ready-made clichés).

Even though knowledge is a necessary result, but not sufficient enough at the present stage of social development, as it does not ensure the cadet's readiness for autonomous activity. Only skills can operate knowledge in solving problems. Therefore, it is expected that during the practical training, the cadets will develop the required skills. They embrace:

– Performing oral and written translation, annotate texts, messages on the organization of border protection, and border-representative cooperation from a foreign language to Ukrainian and from Ukrainian to a foreign language;
– Based on translation analysis determining a satisfactory translation strategy;
– Applying various translation methods, techniques, and transformations;
– Evaluating and choosing language tools in the translation process (taking into account the peculiarities of language systems, language norms, and usages);
– Identifying terms in the original text and selecting their terminological equivalents;
– Analyzing translation results from the point of view of informational, normative-linguistic, and stylistic adequacy;
– Editing translation materials inclusive of detected errors;
– Using special dictionaries, reference books, and taking advantage of modern information technologies in translation activities;
– Demonstrating well-timed nonverbal behavior during live meetings, including eye contact with the audience at the meeting, facial expressions, gestures, etc.

Cadets will also be acquainted with
– Organization and structure of the state border protection body;
– International agreements, laws of Ukraine, resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, State Border Guard Service orders regulating the activities of the state border protection body in the area of responsibility;
– Specifics of the organization of State Border Protection issues in the area of responsibility of the state border protection body as well as border control performance;
– Assessment of the practical training results in the relevant position by the officials of the state border protection body and the supervisor of practical training from the DICBRW.
Findings

One of the ways to update the education’s content and technologies, to harmonize them with modern needs, and integrate them into the world educational space is a systematic analysis of the situation at the border and adjusting the content of academic subjects to recent requirements of professional activity and syllabuses orientation towards a competence and competencies-based approach as well as the creation of the effective mechanisms for its implementation. According to many experts (Larsen et al., 2009; Hasbullah & Sulaiman, 2002; Woon, Abd Karim & Johl, 2007), competencies are indicators that allow us to determine the readiness of graduates for professional activities, their further personal development, and for active participation in society's life.

Human resources are the most significant and costly investments for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. Risks can be extremely high, the cost of poor readiness and low commitment can have an irreparable impact on the service image, and even state security may be put at stake. That is why a competence and competency-based approach to the training process of future professionals can help the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine make it a significant and successful investment.

Competencies measure a person’s appropriateness for a particular job. In the case of border guards, who are trained to be translators/interpreters in special divisions, apart from competencies in linguistics, they are expected to perform competencies in interaction and culture awareness. Together they three make up the integrated competence of a border guard, who studies by specialty 035 Philology.

Following the requirements of the position that cadets are to fulfill after graduation from the academy, during practical training, they have to acquire skills that ensure the formation of their competencies specified in the Philology Degree Program. Among them, there are personal competencies, or as they are also called personal attributes, which do not affect any specific job duties but exert influence on the performance quality required by the position. These include aptitudes to:

- Be critical and self-critical;
- Learn and master functional knowledge;
- Search, process, and analyze information from various sources;
- Identify, pose, and solve problems;
- Work in a team and autonomously;
- Communicate in a foreign language in professional activities, study professional literature in a foreign language;
- Develop constructive thinking, analysis, and synthesis;
- Apply knowledge in practical situations;
- Use information and communication technologies, in particular for solving standard tasks of the professional activity.

Technical or professional competencies relate to the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the duties stipulated by the position, for example, translating a telegram within the
established time limit and communicating its content to the DICBRW authority. These competencies cover the abilities to:

- Use knowledge of the language as a specific sign system, its nature, and functions, registers;
- Use knowledge of the theory and history of the language being studied;
- Analyze dialect and social varieties of the language being studied, and describe the sociolinguistic situation;
- Freely, flexibly, and effectively use the language being studied in oral and written form, in various genre-style varieties and registers of communication (official, unofficial, neutral), to solve problems in all spheres of life;
- Collect and analyze, systematize and interpret linguistic and literary facts, interpret and translate texts;
- Freely use specific terminology to solve professional problems;
- Be aware of the basics and technologies of creating texts of diverse genres and styles in the national and foreign languages;
- Carry out linguistic, literary, and special philological analysis of texts of different styles and genres;
- Organize corporate communication;
- Use the necessary expressions of speech etiquette in everyday and professional situations, communicate in the national and foreign languages, both orally and in writing;
- Apply the acquired skills of translating, reviewing, and annotating texts of the law-enforcement areas in practical activities.

However, the integrated competence lies in the ability to solve sophisticated specialized tasks in the field of philology (linguistics, translation) in the course of professional activity or training, which involves the use of theories and methods of philological science, and is characterized by the complexity and uncertainty of conditions.

When the personal and professional competencies of future border guards-philologists match with the requirements of their positions, it means that the chosen strategy of cadets' professional training falls in line with their future responsibilities. At the same time, the analysis of the on-the-job training results can help identify gaps in the knowledge and skills that cadets experience at the National Academy or in the course of training. The condition of the practical training program completion is satisfied when the cadets achieve the Program learning outcomes, including the abilities to:

- Freely communicate on professional issues with specialists and non-specialists in the national and foreign languages orally and in writing, use them to organize effective cross-cultural communication;
- Work effectively with information: select the necessary information from various sources, critically analyze and interpret it, organize, classify and systematize it;
- Adjust the process of their training and self-education;
- Collaborate with colleagues, representatives of other cultures and religions, supporters of different political views, and so on;
- Use information and communication technologies, in particular for solving standard tasks of the future professional activity;
– Analyze dialect and social varieties of the language being studied, and describe the sociolinguistic situation;
– Know the principles, technologies, and techniques of composing oral and written texts of various genres and styles in the national and foreign languages;
– Know the norms of the literary language and be able to apply them in practice;
– Freely, flexibly, and effectively use the language being studied in oral and written forms, in various genre-style varieties and registers of communication (official, unofficial, neutral), to solve problems in all spheres of life;
– Know professional terminology, develop modern critical, autonomous thinking, recognize social codes of behavior and customs that are generally accepted in different societies and environments, interact with representatives of various state structures and demonstrate solidarity and interest in solving problems of local and national significance;
– Use the necessary expressions of speech etiquette in everyday and professional situations;
– Apply translation skills when performing practical tasks, abstract and annotate texts of the law-enforcement context, perform translation.

Discussion
The education of a cadet studying by specialty 035 Philology is aimed at training a specialist, who meets such qualification characteristics as knowledge of professional-oriented subjects, knowledge of professional technology, including the ability to mobilize knowledge and skills to solve specific professional problems, and the ability to cooperate with colleagues. The graduates are also expected to be highly professional, competent, and ready for high-performance activities in the translation area within the limits of their service duties.

To successfully conduct practical training, the cadets should study the practical training (practice) program before leaving the National Academy. Then, upon arrival at their destination, cadets have to introduce themselves to the Head of the unit and report on the tasks and practical training program. They also ought to study the Division schedule, its mission, and daily routine. Based on the practical training program, cadets draw up an individual working plan for the entire period of practice and submit it for approval to the Head of the division. During the practice, the cadets must plan their work; efficiently conduct each of the events, conscientiously perform all service assignments; keep daily records of the events carried out; be disciplined and impeccable in their uniform and behavior; cherish the honor of the National Academy. Guided by the program and individual task (Appendix A), a cadet draws up a plan for practical training, and their supervisor decides on its approval.

Upon on-the-job training completion, a cadet receives a division supervisor's evaluation statement based on its results. Next to the arrival at the academy, cadets should be present the results of practical training in front of the experts' board (commission) within the period determined by the Rector's order.

In addition to the academic staff of the relevant department and faculty of the Academy, representatives of the State Border Guard Service Administration, regional departments of the
State Border Guard Service, and the State Border Protection Bodies may be involved in the work of the commission.

For the defense of the reports, the cadets submit a statement, a diary (Appendix B) of practical training, and an individual training plan.

The Commission assesses the presented reports based on a previous study of the cadets' accounting documents, including evaluation statement from the division, their oral reports, and answers to additional questions within the scope of the service duties they had performed during the on-the-job training.

Assessment of practical training takes into account the completeness and quality of the implementation of an individual plan; the performance results of the service duties; the performance quality during practical training; the ability to apply theoretical knowledge and the level of skills acquisition for independent performance of tasks in the process of practical training; the content and quality of reporting documents execution; the cadet's compliance with a disciplinary record.

Those cadets who failed to achieve the results stipulated in the training program and received a negative resolution on their training or an unsatisfactory assessment during the defense stage, the Rector decides on re-passing it in the structural units of the Academy during their vacation. The duration of repeated practical training should ensure the implementation of the curriculum and the mandatory provision of annual vacation leave by the requirements of Part 6 of Article 10 of the law of Ukraine “On social and legal protection of military personnel and members of their families”. After completing the practice for a second time, the repeated defense stage occurs. In case of repeated non-fulfillment of the practical training program, receiving a negative resolution on it, or unsatisfactory assessment during the defense of the practice cadets are expelled from the Academy following the procedure established by law.

Cadets who have not defended the results of practical training within the established time limit for valid reasons (illness, family circumstances), by the decision of the Head of the faculty (in agreement with the Head of the Educational Department of the Academy), set an extra time limit for conducting the defense.

Conclusion

The problem is considered precisely in the light of competence and competencies-based approach. The demands, which the State Border Guard Service makes towards the training of future border guards by 035 Philology specialty, are also sensibly considered in the course of practice.

The value of the professional growth of the future border guard's personality and the development of their professional abilities makes up the professional competence that a cadet acquires during training. It includes their ability to successfully perform professional tasks and duties as an interpreter/translator of the DICBRW. The competence and competencies-based approaches have been studied and applied by the faculty instructors at the request of the SBGS Administration because there is evidence of lower qualification levels of the National Academy...
graduates. The drawbacks include failures to interact with people, work in a team, find the necessary information, and use it in solving problems, accomplish relevant translations for the SBGS and its website, in particular.

Therefore, improving the quality of the educational process at the academy on the issues of approaching the theoretical and practical training of the cadets to perform duties in their primary positions challenges the Foreign Languages Department academic staff enormously. The training outcomes have given the faculty staff an array of ideas on improving classes and educational materials content. In addition, the practical competence of the academic staff has to correspond to the current requirements concerning the organization of operational and service activities at the state border to support the overall level of knowledge, practical skills, and aptitudes of the academy’s future graduates.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The methodological implications of establishing English linguistic competencies practical training for future border-guards may offer relevant ideas for further research and at the same time be a helping hand for the faculty to enhance both theoretical and practical training of the cadets. Our further research will concern the issue of eliminating drawbacks in the academic education at the academy and make the training fail-safe as much as possible. Another interest will comprise competencies that necessary to identify knowledge and skills gaps and draft a new provision plan to meet the identified needs.

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### Appendix A

List of possible individual tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ser.No</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ethics of interpreter's behavior during borderline representative meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Translator's corporate etiquette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peculiarities of translating official correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Types of Protocol events and translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interpretation with or without notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Translation cursive</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Official two-way translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sight Interpretation</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Abstract translation</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Sequential translation</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Requirements for making written translations</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Components of interpreter's skills</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Psychological aspects of translation</td>
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<td>Translation and cross-cultural communication</td>
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<td>Modern translation quality standards and their implementation</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Modern criteria for checking the adequacy / accuracy of translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Interpretation and translation: shared and different features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Term and its properties</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Types of terminological units</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Institutional term systems</td>
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<td>Typology of translation types</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Translation tools to achieve adequacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Individual translator's style and adequacy</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Machine translation capabilities and prospects</td>
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<td>Terminological aspects of translation</td>
</tr>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Professional language and translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Professional competence of a translator and its components</td>
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Appendix B

Practical training diary

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<td>Reasons of difficulties in the translation process</td>
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<td>Translation difficulties and barriers</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Methods and ways of professional sequential translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Aspects of translator's nonverbal communication</td>
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</table>
Saudi Female EFL Undergraduates’ Knowledge, Perceptions, Problems, and Suggestions for Research Method Courses

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Abstract
This study aimed to analyze English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students’ knowledge and perceptions of research method courses in the Department of English Language and Literature, at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU). It also investigated the problems that students encounter and offered some suggestions for improving these courses. The significance of the study is that such topic has never been investigated before in such context. The study participants were 1,022 students (Levels three, four, five, six and seven) who voluntarily filled out a questionnaire consisting of sections on four factors/themes: knowledge, perceptions, problems, and suggestions. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software to compare the students’ answers, and a one-way analysis of variance test was used to detect the differences between academic levels regarding each theme. The results showed that regardless of the students’ academic levels, all of them agreed on studying and therefore knowing the research basic components; however, regarding the elements constituting each of these basic components, significant differences were found between the five groups. The results also indicated that these students have positive perceptions of the courses even though they encountered some research-related problems such as in knowing all or some research basic components and their specific elements; writing all or some of them; citing, summarizing, and paraphrasing sources; allocating primary and secondary resources; collecting and analyzing data; and consulting research manuals. Finally, all students agreed that it would be helpful if they were assigned individual research supervisors and coauthored an article with them, a research course was taught in all academic levels for a bachelor’s degree, a research club was established, and research seminars were held.

Keywords: research methods, problems, suggestions, knowledge, perceptions, Saudi female EFL undergraduates

Introduction

Saudi Arabia is well-known for being the world’s biggest oil producer, and its efforts to support research and education are equally boundless. Such a great development is driven by a national educational strategy being employed through the 2030 Vision plan. During the few past years, the number of research publications in different science fields has increased (Fallatah, 2016). Al-Mutairi and Al-Shami (2015) stated that, “The research publication trend in Saudi Arabia for the past 25 years (1988–2013) was slow and lagging from 1988 until 2008 and had remarkable increase thereafter” (p. 85). King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud firmly directed all sectors to activate their role in educational and scientific research to achieve the goal of transforming the kingdom into a knowledge-based country (Fallatah, 2016). Such an improvement would contribute to the development of social and economic prosperity. Undoubtedly, this shift is markedly reflected in the growth of different areas such as improved college programs and courses and the different kinds of learning.

Along this trend of development, Saudi universities implemented plans and programs to enhance scientific research methods by offering courses on advanced teaching methods (Fallatah, 2016). Hence, it is essential to assess the current research method courses to explore the deficient areas needing to be addressed. To achieve such a goal, this study intended to explore four factors/themes of research method courses: knowledge, perceptions, problems, and suggestions at IMSIU. In fact, to the researcher's knowledge, there is no research covering such an area, which aims to analyze learners’ attitudes toward research method courses as an evaluation of their curricula. Thus, there is a knowledge gap on this specific point that can be fully resolved with learners’ perceptions of research courses. This will help curriculum designers and linguistic researchers develop the research courses’ quality and quantity and rethink learners’ points of view in the future. Therefore, this research aimed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between Level three, four, five, six, and seven female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ research knowledge, perceptions, problems, and suggestions?
2. How knowledgeable are Level three, four, five, six, and seven female Saudi EFL undergraduates in terms of research basic components and the elements that constitute them?
3. What are Level three, four, five, six, and seven female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ perceptions of research method courses?
4. What problems did Level three, four, five, six, and seven female Saudi EFL undergraduates encounter when studying in research method courses?
5. What suggestions did Level three, four, five, six, and seven female Saudi EFL undergraduates have for the betterment of research method courses?

Literature Review

Students’ Evaluating of College Courses

Witte and Faigley (1983) declared that evaluating college courses is an extremely important step for forming a critical understanding of the existence of new courses, new methods, and new approaches. It is also a crucial step for transforming other courses to align with newly adopted resources. They maintained that the opinions of program evaluators, teachers, and learners constitute the necessity for course renewal. Zainal at el. (2012) confirmed
that though there is no doubt the instructor is an important tool for delivering the course, considering other factors that can be effective for students’ evaluations of a course also is important.

Curran and Rosen (2006) identified seven factors that constitute learners’ satisfaction with a course. Many researchers have studied and analyzed these factors: (a) student effort (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Ting, 2000), (b) student habits and practices, (c) student self-confidence (Margolis & McCabe, 2003), (d) the classroom environment (Church et al., 2001), (e) the technologies used in course delivery (Clarke, Flaherty, & Mottner, 2001; Drago, Peltier, & Sorensen, 2002), (f) student interactions with instructors and other students (Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Sander, Stevenson, King, & Coates, 2000), (g) and workload (Kember & Leung, 1998). Curran and Rosen (2006) confirmed, “These factors must be considered in any evaluation of courses” (p. 136).

Thus, identifying appropriate course evaluation factors/themes will inevitably provide insights for course developers and higher institutions to develop a better understanding of learners’ needs and course requirements. In this study, students were asked to mark their preferable choices on a course’s content, how it was, how it should be, and the difficulties they faced. Curran and Rosen (2006) stated that when evaluating a course, “Students must make choices with very little formal information as to what a course is about and how it will be conducted” (p. 136). Davis, Guiltinan, and Jones (1979) believed that course evaluators should depend on students’ evaluations because they could provide different opinions that might positively enhance the course material.

**Improving Courses in the Department of English Language and Literature at IMSIU**

The College of Languages and Translation was established in 2001 to equip its students in the program of the Department of English Language and Literature with theoretical and practical knowledge of the language skills, linguistics, translation, and literature. Since then, there have been constant efforts to develop and improve the courses as they, in a great part, control the learning outcomes. Hence, one of the major objectives of the program is to improve students’ individual, academic, and research abilities. Furthermore, the department has not ignored the role of assessing research method courses by surveying faculty members to evaluate the program’s graduate students on their intellectual, personal, and professional skills and their ability to conduct research in different fields (Objectives of the Program, 2020). As such, this research was an attempt to consider the current college learners’ knowledge, perceptions, problems, and suggestions for the purpose of improving the courses.

**Related Studies**

Studies dedicated to improving courses tend to evaluate the course curricula or the program courses related to a specific field (Hansen, 2014). Though many studies have tackled the issue of learners’ perceptions of different academic courses, no study has scrutinized, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, EFL undergraduates' knowledge, attitudes, problems, or even suggestions for research method courses. For example, Lawson et al. (2002) submitted a report on student evaluations of five science and mathematics courses at Arizona State University. The authors employed workshops and teaching reforms supported by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The results showed that teaching reforms improved student outcomes significantly.
In another study, Curran and Rosen (2006) investigated learners’ attitudes about four subject areas at a university in the northeastern United States using a model with seven factors. The findings revealed that factors associated with the physical environment, the course topic, the course execution, and the teacher’s personality are powerful influences for learners to develop positive attitudes toward a course. Additionally, Hansen (2014) evaluated his teaching as well as the economic course he taught by creating an evaluation form as an assessment instrument. The form focused on what students learn. The analysis of the results reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the researcher’s teaching method and provided insights about the course content, design, and pedagogy to enrich student learning.

Method

Research Design

Because of the significance and nature of this study in the sense that it required collecting data on various factors/themes related to research method courses from a large number of participants at a specific point in time, a combination of cross-sectional descriptive quantitative research designs was deemed to be the most suitable.

Setting, Participants, and Research Method Courses

This study was carried out one week before the final exam of the first semester of the academic year 2019–2020 in the Department of English Language and Literature of the College of Languages and Translation at IMSIU. The target population of participants was random students in the aforementioned department, from Level three to Level seven. The researcher chose Levels three through seven because students start studying research methods at the former level (Eng.233; see Appendix A for the course specification), and they apply their knowledge by writing a research proposal at the latter level (Eng.434; see Appendix B for the course specification). Levels four, five, and six were chosen to determine how much research knowledge students obtain before they reach Level seven, not to mention that the students are not allowed to register for Eng.434 unless they have successfully finished some of the requirements shown in Table one, which also illustrates the participants’ distribution across the levels and the research courses’ requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic levels</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>Listening and Speaking (Eng.102), Reading Comprehension (Eng.104), Writing Skills (Eng. 112), and English Grammar (Eng.119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>No requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>No requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Research Methods (Eng.233), and all Writing Skills courses (Eng.112, Eng.211, Eng.214, Eng.315, and Eng.316)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>No requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Instruments
Because of the scarcity of articles investigating EFL undergraduates’ knowledge and problems in, perceptions of, and suggestions for the betterment of mandatory research courses in any context, the researcher designed a five-item Likert-scale questionnaire inquiring about the aforementioned elements. In other words, the questionnaire consisted of four sections, one each on knowledge, perceptions, problems, and suggestions. Each section included one general question on how much Saudi EFL undergraduates agree or disagree with one general statement followed by some specific element-related questions. The questionnaire was proofread by three professors of linguistics who had previously taught the course in the college. Their comments, corrections, and suggestions were taken into consideration. Then the questionnaire was transferred to Google Forms.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The Academic Advising Unit provided a list of all of the college’s course instructors one week before the final exam. The female instructors of research method courses (Levels three and seven) were contacted to administer the questionnaire’s electronic version to their students. The same procedure was undertaken for Level four, five, and six students; however, their instructors were told to inform their students that only those who took Eng.233 in Level three could participate in the study.

**Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics software to calculate statistics such as means and standard deviations. In addition, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to detect the differences between academic levels regarding the four elements: knowledge, perceptions, problems, and suggestions.

**Results**

**Undergraduates’ Knowledge of Research Basic Components**

Table two presents the results of female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ knowledge of basic research components (see appendix C). The table shows descriptive statistics of all academic level participants’ knowledge of research basic components. In the 14 items, the five groups were all slightly above the midpoint of the scale (3.40), indicating that all groups agreed that they have studied and know all the components mentioned. The following outcomes reveal the differences between the groups in terms of their academic levels:

- **For Item one**, the highest mean score was awarded to Level seven (4.4689), whereas Level six (4.1750) scored the lowest.
- **For Item two**, the highest mean score was awarded to Level seven (4.0339), whereas Level four (3.9007) scored the lowest.
- **For Item three**, the highest mean score was awarded to Level four (4.1029), whereas Level 3 (3.8629) scored the lowest.
- **For Item four**, the highest mean score was awarded to Level five (4.0121), whereas Level 3 (3.8145) scored the lowest.
- **For Item five**, the highest mean score was awarded to Level five (3.9677), whereas Level seven (3.7797) scored the lowest.
- **For Item six**, the highest mean score was awarded to Level five (3.9677), whereas Level seven (3.7910) scored the lowest.
• For Item seven, the highest mean score was awarded to Level four (4.3640), whereas Level six (4.0750) scored the lowest.
• For Item eight, the highest mean score was awarded to Level seven (4.1469), whereas Level three (3.9355) scored the lowest.
• For Item nine, the highest mean score was awarded to Level seven (4.1525), whereas Level 3 (3.7903) scored the lowest.
• For Item ten, the highest mean score was awarded to Level four (4.1691), whereas Level 3 (3.8629) scored the lowest.
• For Item eleven, the highest mean score was awarded to Level five (4.0887), whereas Level 6 (3.8200) scored the lowest.
• For Item twelve, the highest mean score was awarded to Level five (4.1250), whereas Level 3 (3.9435) scored the lowest.
• For Item thirteen, the highest mean score was awarded to Level five (4.2429), whereas Level 3 (3.9194) scored the lowest.
• For Item fourteen, the highest mean score was awarded to Level five (4.0478), whereas Level 6 (3.8450) scored the lowest.

The ANOVA test results showed that the significance for Items one ($p = .006$), 7 ($p = .000$), eight ($p = .008$), nine ($p = .002$), ten ($p = .001$), eleven ($p = .008$), 12 ($p = .000$), and 13 ($p = .000$) were below 0.05. Therefore, there were statistically significant differences between the academic levels for these items. For Items two, three, four, five, six, and 14, the significance was above 0.05, meaning that there were no significant differences between the students’ levels for these items.

Undergraduates' Knowledge of Elements Constituting Research Basic Components

Table three displays the results on female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ knowledge of elements constituting each research basic component (see appendix D). The table indicates that the means for Level seven in the 12 items reflected their disagreement about neither studying nor knowing the elements constituting each research basic component, which revealed that students do not really remember these elements. In contrast, the means for Levels three, four, and five showed their agreement that they had studied all of the elements of the research basic components. However, Level six seemed undecided regarding remembering these elements. To generalize, it is obvious from Table three that the highest mean scores for Items one, two, three, four, five, six, ten, 11, and 12 were awarded for Level three, whereas Level four scored the highest on Items seven, eight, and nine. Level seven scored the lowest on all items. The ANOVA test results showed that the significance for all items was below 0.05. Therefore, there were statistically significant differences between the academic levels for all of these items.

Undergraduates' Perceptions of Research Method Courses

Table four shows female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ general perceptions of research method courses (see appendix E). The table reveals that all academic levels’ means for the five items were slightly above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that the majority of students in all levels agreed positively that their research method course was beneficial, was a good foundation for scientific research, was important for understanding scientific research, was necessary to write a scientific research proposal, and should be mandatory in any bachelor’s degree program.
The ANOVA test results indicated that the significance for all items was above 0.05. Therefore, there were no statistically significant differences between the academic levels for all of these items.

Table five presents female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ perceptions of the research method course components (see appendix F). The table indicates that the nine items’ means for all academic levels were slightly above the midpoint of the scale, showing that the majority of students ($M = 4.2919-3.9628$) agreed positively that the research method courses help students choose a research topic and identify research types and classifications, research designs and instruments for data collection, and the research problem. These courses also assist them with how to write the introduction, citations, research questions, and results and utilize the library and internet to write the literature review. The ANOVA test results revealed that the significance for some items was above 0.05 ($2 = .055, 6 = .057, 8 = .092$). Therefore, there were no statistically significant differences between the academic levels for all of these items. As for the other items ($1 = .029, 3 = .001, 4 = .000, 5 = .022, 7 = .045, 9 = .001$), the results showed that the significance for these items was less than 0.05 which means that there were statistically significant differences between the academic levels for all of these items.

**Undergraduates’ Problems in Research Method Courses**

Table six displays the results regarding Saudi female EFL undergraduates’ research problems (see appendix G). The table reveals that all academic levels’ means for the six items were slightly above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that the majority of students ($M = 3.9442-3.7835$) admitted encountering these difficulties. These problems include knowing all or some research basic components and their specific elements; writing all or some research basic components; citing, quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing sources; allocating primary and secondary resources; collecting and analyzing data; and using research manuals to organize the research paper. Additionally, the ANOVA test results showed that the significance for Items one (.739), two (.305), three (.343), five (.436), and six (.146) was above 0.05. Therefore, there were no statistically significant differences between the academic levels for these items. However, the significance for Item four was .038, which is less than 0.05, indicating statistically significant differences between the academic levels for this item.

**Undergraduates’ Suggestions for Research Method Courses**

Table seven shows the results regarding female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ research suggestions (see appendix H). The table indicates that the five items suggested to students for improving the research method courses. The academic levels’ means in said items were all slightly above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that the majority of students ($M = 4.1312-3.9814$) considered these suggestions valuable and significant. These suggestions included each student being assigned a research supervisor, students coauthoring articles with their research supervisors, a research course being taught at all academic levels, a research club being established, and research seminars being held. In addition, ANOVA test results showed that the significance for Items two (.076), three (.498), and four (.085) was above 0.05. Therefore, there were no statistically significant differences between the academic levels for these items. However, the significance for Items one (.004) and five (.048) was less than 0.05, indicating statistically significant differences between the academic levels for these items.
Discussion

Based on the data shown above, the results show that all of the students across the various academic levels had acquired knowledge of research basic components. Although there are significant differences between all groups for some of the research basic components, the differences are still within the range of agreement that they know these components. Clarkson (2008) confirmed that in order for the long-term memories to become fixed and stored, they require learning and repetition, and they remain as such until they are retrieved by cues and triggers. Also according to Clarkson, it is easy for the brain to retrieve the basic components of knowledge, symbols, shapes, and colors, especially if the learned information is enhanced with practice and multiple exposures.

As for the specific elements that constitute each component of the research, significant differences were found between all groups. Levels three and four somehow agreed that they had acquired knowledge of these elements. In terms of the sixth level, students’ knowledge remained neutral; the researcher cannot confirm or disconfirm their knowledge of these 12 elements. As for Level seven, the results showed disagreement about knowing the specific research elements. All of these results could mean that as students’ progress from Level three to Level seven, their research knowledge deteriorates in terms of what constitutes the major elements of research. Students of all levels tend to remember all of the research basic components but gradually forget these components’ specific elements as they progress through the academic levels. In other words, as students study the theoretical aspects of research methods in the third level and then continue to study the practical aspects of research in the seventh level, most of the students, according to this study, tend to forget the specific elements that constitute the research basic components.

Willingham (2015) confirmed that students go through learning loss over time if the learned knowledge is not activated. He tested students’ knowledge twice to explore their retention of knowledge and found that the amount of time between the first and second tests is an important factor. For example, it is easier for students to remember the information they studied in high school when they are in their 20s rather than their 40s. Therefore, in this study, time is considered a crucial factor that bridges learners’ knowledge of the theoretical aspects of research methods and the practical ones. That is to say, the less time that passes between the theoretical aspects and the practical aspects, the more improvement could be achieved in research knowledge. Ellis, Semb, and Cole (1998) investigated the effect of time on information retrieval. They administered several types of test to cognitive psychology students who graduated three to 125 months ago. Their results showed that the students’ memory of concepts and important names was much better in the first three years after learning them but started to decline over the years.

Another factor that allows students to retrieve knowledge is repetitive exposure to the same information. Willingham (2015) stated, “We would also guess that the more a student originally learned in the course, the more she would remember” (p. 3). Hence, it is advised to assign two sequential semesters of research method courses for the purpose of repetitively exposing the students to the research basic components and research specific elements in a short time.
Because the aim of this work was to improve research method courses further, the researcher explored learners’ perceptions of these courses in general and of their components in particular. Initiating a study for the sake of improving a research course without a sound assessment of the learners’ perceptions of the course is not considerably sufficient. The investigation of EFL learners’ perceptions in this study evidences elevated scores regarding their interest in research courses. The results also show that the attributed usefulness of research method courses is captured by different components, such as confirming that the course is beneficial, is a good foundation for scientific research, is important for understanding scientific research, is necessary to write a scientific research proposal, and should be mandatory in any bachelor’s degree program. Learners’ satisfaction with these components reflected their importance in developing research skills, their interest in research courses, and their confidence. In their study, Secret, Ford, and Rompf (2003) found higher scores of interest in research courses among social work students. They investigated the relation between students’ interest in research courses, their research orientation, and their research anxiety. The results of their students’ attitudes toward research courses showed highly positive attitudes.

In this study, the analysis of research problems found that all students agree that the following constituted serious challenges for them: knowing all or some research basic components and their specific elements; writing all or some research basic components; citing, quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing sources; allocating primary and secondary resources; collecting and analyzing data; and using research manuals to organize the research paper. A plausible explanation, though not the only one, for these problems can be attributed to students’ low proficiency levels. Some students have low proficiency levels that are negatively reflected in the writing of their research projects. Cumming, Lai, and Cho (2016) declared that EFL students face different obstacles regarding the basic skills in the foreign language that may affect their research abilities. Other possible reasons could include a lack of encouragement, a lack of experience in writing about research, a lack of motivation, and anxiety. Qasem and Zayid (2019) investigated the challenges that EFL learners at the University of Bisha face when they write proposals and research projects. The results revealed that EFL students encounter difficulties in choosing a topic and appropriate methodology, finding references, suffering a lack of interest in research, and guiding their research. Qasem and Zayid suggested motivating these students and equipping EFL learners with the best research strategies. In the same vein, Rungruangthum (2011) studied research problems of EFL university students. The data analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed that anxiety stemming from academic failure is among the top reasons for these students’ low performance in research writing.

Finally, in terms of the suggestions, the results of this study show no significant differences between the five groups as all of the participants agreed on the factors that would make the research courses more helpful: each of them being assigned a research supervisor other than the course teacher, coauthoring an article with the supervisor, the college implementing the courses at all academic levels, and the college establishing a research club and holding seminars and conferences. All of these results could mean that students realize the importance of the suggested items. To clarify, many studies (e.g., Alghizzi, 2011, 2012) have implicitly indicated that EFL students—regardless of the courses they are taking—study for final exam purposes.
only, and as soon as they finish, they tend to forget the memorized information. Exposing students to the same information with different techniques, environments, and means would most likely foster the feasibility of retrieving it when needed. Cowan (2008) asserted that memories that are frequently activated through exposure to the same information in different contexts can be recalled easily. He confirmed that such exposure would activate the neural networks in which the information is encoded, which will eventually activate the memory to remember the information easily.

Conclusion, Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations

This study was designed mainly for the purpose of examining four factors/themes: knowledge, perceptions, problems, and suggestions of female EFL undergraduates for the research method courses taught in the Department of English Language and Literature at the College of Languages and Translation. With such multifaceted results, there is a need to emphasize certain implications, limitations, and recommendations not only for the faculty of the above-mentioned college, but also for EFL researchers.

For example, the participants’ results, though limited to being from one gender and having been extracted from a questionnaire, implied that the theoretical explanation of research components (basic and specific)—even with female students’ highly positive research perception—is still not enough for the accurate and smooth execution of a research proposal. Students admitted encountering problems in the execution and application of the theoretical knowledge when choosing, collecting information on, writing about, and analyzing their research topics.

Replicating this research is recommended, but only with the inclusion of male EFL undergraduates and with semi-structured interviews. The prospective results would most likely substantiate the aforementioned ones and provide answers about why EFL undergraduates in general have or do not have positive perspectives on research courses and yet struggle or do not struggle to apply their knowledge.

What can be understood from this research in general and its results in particular is that the EFL undergraduates’ completion of the prerequisite courses required for successful registration in the research method courses and the actual research writing practice—if there is any—are still insufficient.

The researcher could demand revision of the curricula for the bachelor’s degree in English to include research courses from the first year, but such a suggestion is not feasible as the procedures to follow and the processes to go through to change a study plan require a long time and approval from the university-related deanships. Therefore, for immediate intervention, it is more practicable to modify the research method courses’ specifications by increasing the courses’ prerequisites and incorporating most—if not all—of the suggestions highlighted in this study. The researcher believes that making use of the time between the research method courses with the suggestions mentioned and allowing EFL undergraduates to write, revise, and edit their research topics repetitively and under the close guidance of individual supervisors would most likely enable the students to meet the research productivity they are expected to meet before
graduation. Finally, it is recommended for EFL researchers to examine the above-mentioned success in order to expand its application in other similar colleges.

About the Author:
Talal Musaed Alghizzi, PhD. is an assistant professor in Applied Linguistics at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU). He has obtained his MA and PhD from University College Cork in Ireland. He is the chairman of the Chinese Department in the College of Languages and Translation. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1088-9216

References


Appendix A
Research Methods (Eng.233) Course Specification

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Institution: Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University</th>
<th>Date: 7/10/2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College/Department: Languages and Translation (Department of English Language and Literature)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

A. Course Identification and General Information

1. Course title and code: Research Methods (Eng.233)
2. Credit hours: 2 hours
3. Program(s) in which the course is offered.
   (If general elective available in many programs indicate this rather than list programs)
   - BA in English Language and Literature
4. Name of faculty member responsible for the course
5. Level/year at which this course is offered: Level 3 – 2nd year
6. Pre-requisites for this course (if any):
   - Students must pass Level 2 Listening and Speaking (Eng.102), Reading Comprehension (Eng.104), Writing Skills (Eng.112), and English Grammar (Eng.119)
7. Co-requisites for this course (if any): None
8. Location if not on main campus:
   - Main Campus (male section)
   - King Abdullah Female Campus
9. Mode of Instruction (mark all that apply):
   a. Traditional classroom
   b. Blended (traditional and online)
   c. E-learning
   d. Correspondence
   f. Other: Accessing computerized Databases for research sources
   
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<th>Method</th>
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<td>Blended</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

B Objectives

1. What is the main purpose for this course?
   - This course aims at familiarizing students with the basic issues and concepts in academic research.

2. Briefly describe any plans for developing and improving the course that are being implemented. (e.g. increased use of IT or web based reference material, changes in content as a result of new research in the field)
   - Assigning students more active roles in the course by getting them to do an online search task based on every class.
   - Updating the content of the course in light of recent research and recently published textbooks.

C. Course Description (Note: General description in the form used in Bulletin or handbook)

Course Description:

The course introduces students to the main concepts in scientific research such as defining academic research and identifying its main steps, choosing a subject for a research paper, narrowing the subject into a research topic, writing a thesis statement, finding sources, evaluating reading sources, following the right academic reading strategies, how to cite references, and plagiarism.
1. Topics to be Covered

<table>
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<tr>
<th>List of Topics</th>
<th>No. of Weeks</th>
<th>Contact hours</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of a Research Paper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper Sections, Chapters, and Organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing and Narrowing a Research Topic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating and Using Online Sources and Books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citations, Quotations, and Plagiarism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Manuals (APA, MLA, etc.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of a research paper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Course components (total contact hours and credits per semester):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Tutorial</th>
<th>Laboratory/Studio</th>
<th>Practical</th>
<th>Other:</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Hours</td>
<td>Planed</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>Planed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Additional private study/learning hours expected for students per week: 2 hours

4. Course Learning Outcomes in NQF Domains of Learning and Alignment with Assessment Methods and Teaching Strategy

On the table below are the five NQF Learning Domains, numbered in the left column.

First, insert the suitable and measurable course learning outcomes required in the appropriate learning domains (see suggestions below the table). Second, insert supporting teaching strategies that fit and align with the assessment methods and intended learning outcomes. Third, insert appropriate assessment methods that accurately measure and evaluate the learning outcome. Each course learning outcomes, assessment method, and teaching strategy ought to reasonably fit and flow together as an integrated learning and teaching process. (Courses are not required to include learning outcomes from each domain.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code #</th>
<th>NQF Learning Domains And Course Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Course Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>Course Assessment Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Knowledge By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>List the good qualities for writing a research paper</td>
<td>• Class discussion</td>
<td>• Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Assignments</td>
<td>• Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Case studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Write a proper thesis statement</td>
<td>• Group/pair work to formulate tentative thesis statements</td>
<td>• Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Describe the different types of sources (e.g. primary sources)</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Introducing samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td><strong>Cognitive Skills</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;em&gt;By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:&lt;/em&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Compose the right research questions</td>
<td>Tutorial sessions</td>
<td>Assigned tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Subdivide a model research paper into its constituent sections (method, review of literature, etc.)</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>Class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td><strong>Interpersonal Skills &amp; Responsibility</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;em&gt;By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:&lt;/em&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Illustrate one's thesis statement in a research paper</td>
<td>Group/pair work:</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate one's viewpoint avoiding plagiarism (academic integrity)</td>
<td>PowerPoint presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td><strong>Communication, Information Technology, Numerical</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;em&gt;By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:&lt;/em&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Use electronic resources (data e.g. bases)</td>
<td>Web search techniques</td>
<td>Using Smart Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td><strong>Psychomotor</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;em&gt;By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:&lt;/em&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><strong>Schedule of Assessment Tasks for Students During the Semester</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Assessment task (i.e., essay, test, quizzes, group project, examination, speech, oral presentation, etc.)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Week Due</strong></td>
<td><strong>Proportion of Total Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Assigned homework tasks</td>
<td>All weeks</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Classroom short presentations</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Week 4 &amp; 7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mid-term test</td>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Final-term exam</td>
<td>End of the term</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**D. Student Academic Counseling and Support**

1. Arrangements for availability of faculty and teaching staff for individual student consultations and academic advice, (include amount of time teaching staff are expected to be available each week)
Two hours a week will be allocated for individual student consultations and academic advice

**E. Learning Resources**


2. List Essential References Materials (Journals, Reports, etc.)<br><br>Writing Research Papers, Macmillan.

3. List Electronic Materials, Web Sites, Facebook, Twitter, etc.<br><br>https://www.msvu.ca/site/media/msvu/howtowrite.researchpaper2.pdf
4. Other learning material such as computer-based programs/CD, professional standards or regulations and software.
None

F. Facilities Required
Indicate requirements for the course including size of classrooms and laboratories (i.e. number of seats in classrooms and laboratories, extent of computer access, etc.)

1. Accommodation (Classrooms, laboratories, demonstration rooms/labs, etc.)
   ✓ A class computer
   ✓ Data Show
   ✓ Smart Board equipped Classrooms

2. Technology resources (AV, data show, Smart Board, software, etc.)
   ✓ Lecture rooms
   ✓ Computer labs

3. Other resources (specify, e.g. if specific laboratory equipment is required, list requirements or attach list)
None

G. Course Evaluation and Improvement Processes

1. Strategies for Obtaining Student Feedback on Effectiveness of Teaching
   - Formal anonymous course evaluations by students at the end of course
   - In addition to informal student feedback throughout the semester

2. Other Strategies for Evaluation of Teaching by the Instructor or by the Department
   In class, peer review to give support and disseminate good practice.

3. Processes for Improvement of Teaching
   Discussing challenges in the classroom with colleagues.

4. Processes for Verifying Standards of Student Achievement (e.g. check marking by an independent member teaching staff of a sample of student work, periodic exchange and remarking of tests or a sample of assignments with staff at another institution)
   Checking grading of a sample of examination papers either by a second faculty member marker

5. Describe the planning arrangements for periodically reviewing course effectiveness and planning for improvement.
   Arranging with another institution to have two common test items included on an exam and compare marks given

Name of Course Instructor:
Signature: _______________   Date Specification Completed:

Program Coordinator: ________________________________________________
Signature: _________________________            Date Received: _______________

Appendix B

Research (Eng.434) Course Specification

Institution: Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University
College/Department: Languages and Translation (Department of English Language and Literature)

A. Course Identification and General Information

1. Course title and code: Research (Eng.434)
2. Credit hours: 2 hours
3. Program(s) in which the course is offered.
   (If general elective available in many programs indicate this rather than list programs)
   • BA in English Language and Literature
4. Name of faculty member responsible for the course
5. Level/year at which this course is offered: Level 7 – 4th year
6. Pre-requisites for this course (if any):
   - Students must pass Level 3 Research Methods (Eng.233) and all essay writing courses (Eng:112, 211, 214, 315, & 316).

7. Co-requisites for this course (if any): None

8. Location if not on main campus:
   - Main Campus (male section)
   - King Abdullah Female Campus

9. Mode of Instruction (mark all that apply):
   - a. Traditional classroom: 40%
   - b. Blended (traditional and online): 15%
   - c. E-learning: 45%
   - d. Correspondence:
   - f. Workshops and activities: 45%

Comments:

B. Objectives

3. What is the main purpose for this course?

   This course aims to allow level-seven students apply the research knowledge they gained from studying level-three Research Methods (Eng.233). Therefore, each student will write a research proposal which reflects their ability to:
   - choose a research topic suitable for a research paper that examines a specific research problem, locate relevant literature on the topic and write a literature review accordingly,
   - form research questions/hypotheses skillfully,
   - identify and design a particular methodological approach appropriate to their chosen research topic (e.g., selecting the participants and tools needed to gather data on the topic, etc.),
   - critically synthesize data from quantitative and qualitative analyses, and document the cited references. All of such will be developed by students gradually by supplying multiple research drafts and presenting them.

4. Briefly describe any plans for developing and improving the course that are being implemented. (e.g. increased use of IT or web based reference material, changes in content as a result of new research in the field)

   1. Increased use of IT or web-based reference material
   2. Use Web-CT for uploading material
   3. Consistently change the list of readings to include recent publications
   4. Use of www.tesol.org and www.moodle.com for collaborative activities
   5. Include e-books

C. Course Description (Note: General description in the form used in Bulletin or handbook)

Course Description:

   The course allows students to practically show the basic research processes and elements they learned from level-three Research Method (Eng.233). It is particularly designed to develop students' research skills required for planning and executing basic research paper, help them explain in depth the main parts of the academic term paper, and train them on how to use the library, modern technology, and references and documentation, etc.

1. Topics to be Covered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Topics</th>
<th>No. of Weeks</th>
<th>Contact hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing a Research Proposal: The three concepts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Reading and Topic Selection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the table below are the five NQF Learning Domains, numbered in the left column. First, insert the suitable and measurable course learning outcomes required in the appropriate learning domains (see suggestions below the table). Second, insert supporting teaching strategies that fit and align with the assessment methods and intended learning outcomes. Third, insert appropriate assessment methods that accurately measure and evaluate the learning outcome. Each course learning outcomes, assessment method, and teaching strategy ought to reasonably fit and flow together as an integrated learning and teaching process. (Courses are not required to include learning outcomes from each domain.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>NQF Learning Domains And Course Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Course Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>Course Assessment Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Knowledge By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>Class participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Outline the components of research proposal</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>Written assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Describe various kinds of references</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>Quizzes and midterms questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Cognitive Skills By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:</td>
<td>Assigned texts for reading</td>
<td>Written assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Interpret and criticize the research that others produce</td>
<td>Assigned texts for written analysis</td>
<td>Formal debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Design and conduct simple research studies under supervision</td>
<td>A typed double-spaced research essay</td>
<td>Individual/group presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.0 Interpersonal Skills & Responsibility  
*By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:*

| 3.1 | Use the necessary skills to communicate | • Give students choices in selecting their topics  
• Require a timeline and evidence of work completed for projects  
• Show and explain requirements and criteria to students before assignments so they know what qualities are desirable to be demonstrated |
|    |    | • Assign group projects/presentations  
• Include class participation as a component of the course assessment  
• Give feedback on group process along with feedback on content |
| 3.2 | Show effective participation in class discussion |    |

4.0 Communication, Information Technology, Numerical  
*By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:*

| 4.1 | Demonstrate reputable websites for research | • Initial assessment of IT skill  
• Typed written assignments, written, and oral exams |
|     |    | • Include use of PowerPoint as a necessary component of a presentation  
• Presentations and oral exam |
| 4.2 | Assess the use of PowerPoint to support a presentation |    |

5.0 Psychomotor  
*By the end of this course, the TP student will be able:*

|    |    |    |

5.1 NA

5.2 NA

5. Schedule of Assessment Tasks for Students During the Semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment task (i.e., essay, test, quizzes, group project, examination, speech, oral presentation, etc.)</th>
<th>Week Due</th>
<th>Proportion of Total Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research proposal: final draft</td>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral exam (defense of the paper presented)</td>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Student Academic Counseling and Support

1. Arrangements for availability of faculty and teaching staff for individual student consultations and academic advice. (include amount of time teaching staff are expected to be available each week)

Three office hours per week

E. Learning Resources

1. List Required Textbooks
   Lecture Notes

2. List Essential References Materials (Journals, Reports, etc.)
3. List Electronic Materials, Web Sites, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
   - http://llt.msu.edu
   - http://tesol-journal.com

4. Other learning material such as computer-based programs/CD, professional standards or regulations and software.
   - Signed Student Code of honor explained during student orientation to university to protect against plagiarism
   - The use of http://turnitin.com software program to detect plagiarism

F. Facilities Required

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicate requirements for the course including size of classrooms and laboratories (i.e. number of seats in classrooms and laboratories, extent of computer access, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Accommodation (Classrooms, laboratories, demonstration rooms/labs, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Technology resources (AV, data show, Smart Board, software, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other resources (specify, e.g. if specific laboratory equipment is required, list requirements or attach list)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. Course Evaluation and Improvement Processes

1. Strategies for Obtaining Student Feedback on Effectiveness of Teaching
   - Midterm evaluation feedback form to increase instructor’s awareness of the weak and strong points of the class
   - End of term college evaluation of course by students (to be collected by the department)
   - End-of-term debriefing in class of students and teacher regarding what went well and what could have gone better
   - Small group instructional diagnosis (SGID) whereby instructors exchange classes and gather information from each other’s students on specific points outlined by the department and the instructor being evaluated

2. Other Strategies for Evaluation of Teaching by the Instructor or by the Department
   1. Self-evaluation
   2. Prepare general file for course
   3. Review sample of students' work by another staff member
   4. Evaluation of a sample exam and drill by another staff member
   5. Peer evaluation to assess ability of faculty members to work with their colleagues

3. Processes for Improvement of Teaching
   1. Training sessions
   2. Workshops to facilitate the exchange of experiences amongst faculty members
   3. Regular meetings where problems are discussed and solutions given
   4. Discussion of challenges in the classroom with colleagues and supervisors
   5. Encouragement of faculty members to attend professional development conferences
   6. Keep up to date with pedagogical theory and practice
   7. Set goals for achieving excellence in teaching at the beginning of each new semester after reviewing last semester’s teaching strategies and results

4. Processes for Verifying Standards of Student Achievement (e.g. check marking by an independent member teaching staff of a sample of student work, periodic exchange and remarking of tests or a sample of assignments with staff at another institution)
   1. Identify rubrics for each students’ activity or assignment
   2. Check marking of a sample of examination papers either by a resident or visiting faculty member
   3. Arrange with another institution to have two common test items included on an exam and compare marks given
   4. Students who believe they are under graded can have their papers checked by a second reader

5. Describe the planning arrangements for periodically reviewing course effectiveness and planning for improvement.

Name of Course Instructor:
Saudi Female EFL Undergraduates’ Knowledge

Appendix C

Table 2. *Female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ knowledge of research basic components*

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

I have studied and therefore know these research basic components in the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic level and number</th>
<th>Research topic</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>Acknowledgment</th>
<th>Table of contents</th>
<th>Tables and figures</th>
<th>Dedication</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Literature review</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Appendices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (N = 248)</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.012</td>
<td>3.967</td>
<td>3.967</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.975</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.080</td>
<td>3.943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (N = 177)</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.966</td>
<td>3.779</td>
<td>3.791</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.146</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.242</td>
<td>3.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (N = 177)</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.955</td>
<td>3.898</td>
<td>3.897</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>3.960</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.113</td>
<td>3.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (N = 177)</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.955</td>
<td>3.898</td>
<td>3.897</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>3.960</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.113</td>
<td>3.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S (N = 7)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>90</td>
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<td>35</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>S (N = 7)</td>
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<td>.881</td>
<td>.893</td>
<td>.9398</td>
<td>.9431</td>
<td>.9570</td>
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<td>.9982</td>
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<td>.882</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>.911</td>
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<td>.9714</td>
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</table>
ANOVA results

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<td>F</td>
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<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<td>.002</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (*) indicates the significant results at 0.05

Appendix D

Table 3. Female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ knowledge of elements constituting each research basic component

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
I have studied and therefore know the elements constituting the following research basic components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic level and number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>.914</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.919</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.931</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.919</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.91</td>
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<td><strong>S</strong></td>
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<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.952</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.950</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
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<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.84</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>00</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>.986</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.986</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.994</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.77</td>
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<tr>
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<td>00</td>
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<td>00</td>
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<td>00</td>
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<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
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<td>.698</td>
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<td>.661</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td>.706</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td>.738</td>
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<td>.655</td>
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<td><strong>M</strong></td>
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<td>2.21</td>
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<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.25</td>
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<td>2.25</td>
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<td>81</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>99</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td><strong>S</strong></td>
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<td>.602</td>
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<td>.666</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td>.690</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.689</td>
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<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.32</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>82</td>
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<td>72</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
<td>207</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>014</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>778</td>
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<td>979</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>404</td>
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ANOVA results

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<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>137.67</td>
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<td></td>
<td>129.71</td>
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<td></td>
<td>140.89</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>149.40</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>155.19</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>150.96</td>
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<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>155.64</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$1 = $Choosing a research topic, $2 = $Introduction, $3 = $Literature review, $4 = $Methodology, $5 = $Results, $6 = $Discussion, $7 = $Conclusion, $8 = $References, $9 = $Citations and quotations, $10 = $Secondary and primary resources, $11 = $Research manuals e.g., APA, $12 = $Organization of the paper.

Note. (*) indicates the significant results at 0.05.

Table 4. Saudi Female EFL undergraduates’ general perceptions of research method courses

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The research method course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic level and number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>.84223</td>
<td>.91824</td>
<td>.87285</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>.82885</td>
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<td>.77687</td>
<td>.85666</td>
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<tr>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>.87691</td>
<td>.83901</td>
<td>.88255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (N = 200)</td>
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<td>4.1600</td>
<td>3.8850</td>
<td>4.0950</td>
<td>3.9700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>.85325</td>
<td>.93065</td>
<td>.90001</td>
<td>.92920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (N = 177)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.1525</td>
<td>3.9944</td>
<td>4.1638</td>
<td>4.1243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>.90101</td>
<td>.93843</td>
<td>.87985</td>
<td>.96902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.1616</td>
<td>3.9882</td>
<td>4.1283</td>
<td>4.0744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>S</td>
<td>.86338</td>
<td>.90849</td>
<td>.84609</td>
<td>.90225</td>
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</table>

ANOVA results

<table>
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<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.628</td>
<td>.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.086</td>
<td>.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.562</td>
<td>.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.280</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.323</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = is beneficial.
2 = is a good foundation for scientific research.
3 = is important for understanding scientific research.
4 = is necessary to write a scientific research proposal.
5 = should be mandatory in any bachelor’s degree program.

Note. (*) indicates the significant results at 0.05.

Appendix F

Table 5. Saudi Female EFL undergraduates’ perceptions of the research method course components

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

This research method course helps me:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic level and number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>.82014</td>
<td>.89202</td>
<td>.91251</td>
<td>.94512</td>
<td>.95931</td>
<td>.97920</td>
<td>.96282</td>
<td>.92674</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Table 6. Saudi female EFL undergraduates’ research problems

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
I encounter some difficulties in:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Academic level and number</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 (N = 272)</td>
<td>1.12137</td>
<td>1.11410</td>
<td>1.15095</td>
<td>1.08331</td>
<td>1.00858</td>
<td>.98680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (N = 200)</td>
<td>1.05358</td>
<td>1.00043</td>
<td>1.05559</td>
<td>.99330</td>
<td>.97324</td>
<td>.88591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (N = 177)</td>
<td>3.9395</td>
<td>3.7984</td>
<td>3.8024</td>
<td>3.7944</td>
<td>3.8710</td>
<td>3.7863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N = 1,021)</td>
<td>3.9000</td>
<td>3.7450</td>
<td>3.7850</td>
<td>3.7450</td>
<td>3.8000</td>
<td>3.6950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (*) indicates the significant results at 0.05.
### Appendix H

**Table 7. Female Saudi EFL undergraduates’ research suggestions**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

It would be helpful if:

<table>
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<th>Research suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (N = 124)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.9435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>.93966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (N = 272)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.1765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>.91629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (N = 248)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.1694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>.91520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (N = 200)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 (N = 177)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.2881</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>.93025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N = 1,021)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.1312</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
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</table>

**ANOVA results**

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3.877</td>
<td>2.123</td>
<td>.843</td>
<td>2.054</td>
<td>2.402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.004*</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.498</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.048*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = Each student was assigned a research supervisor other than the course teacher.
2 = A student could coauthor an article with their research supervisor.
3 = A research course was taught in all academic levels of the Bachelor of Arts.
4 = A research club (similar to the writing club) was established at the college.
5 = Research seminars or conferences for student research were held.

*Note. (*) indicates the significant results at 0.05.
Pragma-linguistic and Socio-pragmatic Transfer among Iraqi Female EFL Learners in Refusing Marriage Proposals

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Nawal Fadhel Abbas
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University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

Fatima Falih Ahmed
English Department, Midlands Technical College
School of English and the Humanities, West Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Sura Hameed
MATC- Milwaukee Area Technical College
Lead and Stem Pathway advisor, USA

Received: 5/4/2021  Accepted: 6/24/2021  Published: 6/28/2021

Abstract
In the framework of this study, the phenomenon of transfer is probed pragma-linguistically and socio-linguistically concerning marriage situations among Iraqi EFL learners. The study also strives to look at the refusal strategies most commonly employed by Iraqi female English as a foreign Language (EFL) learners compared to their counterparts, American native speakers of English. The study involved 70 female participants who answered a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which contained ten marriage proposals to be refused. Each situation entailed refusal of a person from a higher, an equal, and lower status. The researchers adapted Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss Weltz’s (1990) taxonomy of refusal for analyzing the data comprehensively. The study’s findings indicated that Iraqi female EFL learners followed similar patterns of refusing marriage situations to American speakers. The most prevalent strategies used by the two groups were “reasons/ excuses and explanations,” followed by “statements of regrets,” and then “non-performative statements” with slight variation in frequency. However, the Iraqi learners’ native language and culture affected how they formulated their refusal; hence they manifested pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic transfer in particular areas. The areas of pragma-linguistic transfer included the literal translation of words, expressions, and structures into their refusal in English. As for the socio-pragmatic areas, the transfer occurred in certain Arabic culture features like elaboration, exaggeration, repetition, endearing terms, and many others in expressing the target language, English.

Keywords: Beebe et al.’s taxonomy, Iraqi EFL learners, marriage proposals, pragma-linguistic transfer, refusal, socio-pragmatic transfer

Introduction

Like any speech act, refusal holds to be universal and culturally distinctive. It occurs in all languages around the world; however, individuals realize it differently across cultures. Refusal is a negative response to initiating an act like requests, invitations, suggestions, and offers. Refusal is face-threatening in nature that interlocutors need to utilize several strategies to mitigate its adverse impact, and thereby avoid offending their addressee. In pragmatics, some factors that determine the choice of certain utterances in a given context (Majeed, 2021). Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) state that refusal is subject to several social constraints, for instance, social status, distance, age, educational background, gender, and many others. In marriage situations where one person in a relationship asks for another’s hand, the answer to the proposal could be either agreement, which is a preferred act, or refusal, which is not. Brown and Levinson (1987) mention that refusal contradicts the wants of the addressees’ face as well as the speaker (Abbas, 2013), and hence the speaker cannot engage in an event initiated by the addressee (Chen, 1996). Refusal is “a sensitive, pragmatic task,” as claimed by Yamagashira (2001, p.260), and that is why interlocutors need to manage refusal situations carefully.

Notwithstanding, refusal represents a significant challenge for non-native speakers to perform appropriately because mastery of the target language and culture are required. It is not easy to make a rejection using a foreign language without the risk of offending interlocutors; hence, the non-native learners’ linguistic knowledge is not enough, but pragmatic expertise is necessary for this context. An EFL learner, for example, Iraqi in this case, can have great expertise in vocabulary and a good understanding of grammar. Still, if pragmatic competence is insufficient or flawed, then the speech act is not applied felicitously, and thereby misunderstandings and communication breakdowns can still arise (Phuong, 2006). As mentioned earlier, refusal is global in that it occurs in every language equally, but it is performed across cultures differently. Culture plays a prominent role in the way refusal is performed and the selection of a specific strategy. What might be considered proper in one culture might not be so in another. Non-native speakers of English, i.e., Iraqi female EFL learners in this regard, may transfer the cultural conventions and rules of their first language into the performance of the target language.

Pragmatics, according to Leech (1983), is composed of two components where a transfer can take place, these are pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic (Mohammed & Abbas, 2016). Lado (1957) elucidated such a phenomenon and labeled it as pragmatic transfer where individuals transfer, both productively and receptively, not only the forms and meanings of their native language and culture, but also their distribution into the target language and culture (Eldin, 2018).

Kasper (1992) states that pragmatic transfer takes two forms: either positive or negative transfer. The former represents a proof of socio-cultural and pragmatic universality across languages. In contrast, the negative pragmatic transfer, refers to the sociolinguistic norms and conventions of the native language negatively transferred into the target language. This process often leads to pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983), which is the inability to comprehend the meaning of an utterance in the target language. The socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge of the mother tongue when communicating using the target language causes deviant
perceptions and behaviors to the speakers of the second language (Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross, 2006). Kasper (1992) clarified the reason behind this phenomenon, irrespective of linguistic mastery, is the absence of culturally relevant schemata (Eldin, 2018).

Kiok (1995) stresses that pragmatic errors are more weighty than lexical or syntactic ones because lacking knowledge of the differences between cultures creates communication failure. It is necessary for non-native speakers to know the norms of the target language so that they will be able to handle refusal successfully. It is where the significance of the study lies; pragmatic errors are requisite for non-native speakers to avert, mainly when performing refusal in sensitive situations such as marriage proposals. The following are the questions the study attempts to answer:

1. What are the most frequent strategies used by Iraqi female EFL learners and American English native speakers when refusing marriage situations?
2. What areas of the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic transfer may emerge in the refusals of Iraqi female EFL learners?

Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the face-threatening act of refusal as performed by Iraqi female EFL learners in marriage situations, a context that no study tackled before. It also scrutinizes the areas in which pragma-linguistic transfer and socio-pragmatic take place.

**Literature Review**

**Refusal**

A refusal is a speech act that emerges as a negative response to initiating acts, such as requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions (Gass & Houck, 1999). A refusal is non-compliant, dispreferred (Levinson, 1983), and face-threatening; thus, interlocutors must perform it carefully in the contexts where it occurs, especially in marriage situations. Refusing causes contradictions to the expectations of the interlocutors, and thereby, their interpersonal relationships will be at risk (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Although it is almost difficult for learners to achieve, it demands a high level of pragmatic competence so as to felicitously perform such an act (Al-Eryani, 2007; Chen, 1996). Interlocutors must understand the social and cultural factors, like social distance and social status, that influence refusing to achieve successful communication (Moaveni, 2014).

It is refusing someone in a particular situation, like marriage proposals, that demands interlocutors of several linguistic strategies to protect the hearers’ face. Beebe et al. (1990) proposed a taxonomy for refusal strategies that involved three kinds of strategies, namely, direct, indirect, and adjunct. The direct includes two types of refusing explicitly, and the indirect involves 11 types of refusing implicitly to minimize the face threat. The last one encompasses adjuncts which contain four types of strategies that do not stand by themselves but accompany other strategies (Saud, 2019). These strategies are illustrated in the following Table one (Appendix A)

**Pragmatic Transfer**

Takahashi and Beebe (1987, p.133) remark that the speech act of refusal is a “major cross-cultural stinking point for ESL students.” First, learners may unintentionally offend their
Pragma-linguistic and Socio-pragmatic Transfer Qassim, Abbas, Ahmed & Hameed

interlocutors, and this causes communication breakdown (Al-Shboul & Maros, 2012). Second, speakers of any language must know not only grammatical and lexical knowledge of the language but also its underlying pragmatic rules (Izadi & Ziliae, 2015). Third, the linguistic obstruction that already exists in the learners’ culture, their first language, and their assessment of the situations (Nurudeen, 2008) is another factor influencing refusal; and face-threatening nature of the speech act further complicates the matter (Al-Eryani, 2007; Chen, 1996). Al-Shalawi (1997) elucidated that refusal may offer a source of information on the socio-cultural values, and an insight into the social standards embedded in a specific culture (Al-Shboul & Maros, 2012). Pragmatic transfer emerges when learners of a foreign or second language retreat to the norms of their first language to perform in the target language. Kasper (1992) states that pragmatic transfer is “the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than the first language on their comprehension, production, and learning of second language pragmatic information.” (p. 207). Thomas (1983) subdivided this type of transfer into a pragma-linguistic transfer, refers to the properness of the linguistic content, and the other is a socio-pragmatic transfer, denoting the coveted function and the acceptability of a particular speech act to the social context. Thomas (1983) stated that pragma-linguistic transfer expresses the improper use of a speech act strategy from the first language to the target language since these utterances are not “semantically/syntactically equivalent” (p. 101), resulting in conveying different pragmatic forces when using the target language (Eldin, 2018). Kasper (1992) observed that in pragma-linguistic transfer, the illocutionary force and the courtesy value associated with a specific linguistic utterance of the mother tongue affects the way learners produce and perceive its function in the target language. Kasper (1992) maintained that socio-pragmatic transfer occurs when “the social perceptions underlying language users’ interpretations and performance of linguistic action in L2 as influenced by their assessment of subjectively equivalent L1 contexts.” (p. 209). Such a process often leads to pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983), which is the inability to comprehend the meaning of an utterance in the target language (Salman & Ebadi, 2015). It can relate to, according to Cenoz (2003), the learners’ unawareness of the social and cultural conventions that govern the realization of several speech acts of the target language. Differences include the perception of some social factors, such as social distance and power relations, and the assessments of the appropriateness of various behaviors (Eldin, 2018).

Previous Studies on Refusal and Pragmatic Transfer

Due to the significance of pragmatic transfer, several studies conducted on refusal across various languages and cultures. These researchers discussed refusal in terms of the most frequent strategies used by non-native speakers compared to native speakers of English, others examined the pragmatic transfer occurring when performing refusal, and some studies examined refusal in movies (Nailah, 2016), and series (Putri, 2014). Nonetheless, to the researchers’ best knowledge, no study has tackled refusal in marriage situations; thus the current research examines refusal and pragmatic errors as occurring in marriage proposals among Iraqi Female EFL learners.

As adequately put by Beebe et al. (1990), refusal is a significant challenge for several non-native speakers to perform across cultures. All the studies in the literature review collected data through a DCT, and analyzed using Beebe et al.’s (1990) scheme of refusal strategies. Beebe et al’s (1990) study is one of the significant studies that examine the strategies of refusal.
used by Japanese speaking their language, Japanese speaking English, and American speaking English. It revealed that Americans and Japanese differed significantly in using refusal strategies, particularly in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas. Al-Shalawi (1997) investigated the speech act of refusal among Saudis and Americans. His study attempted to identify the culture's influence on the speech of their community and their style of communication. Findings revealed that, in performing refusals, there was a similarity between the two groups in the use of semantic formulas. Still, there was a difference in the use of the direct strategy “No.”

Nelson, Al Batal and El-Bakary (2002) examined how Americans and Egyptians make refusals in specific situations. Their study investigated refusal strategies, the extent of directness, and the effect of gender and social status. In general, the findings revealed that the Egyptian and the American participants used similar refusal strategies and that both groups mentioned negative willingness as a reason for their refusals. Also, the Egyptians differed from Americans in the level of directness used in face-to-face interaction. Stevens (1993) explored refusal among Arabic and English. It concluded that there were multiple strategies employed when refusing, interlocutors scarcely refuse in a direct manner, and those second language learners misused refusal strategies (as cited in Phuong, 2006). Al-Issa (1998) conducted a study on refusal among Jordanian Arabic learners and American English native speakers. The findings revealed that Jordanian were more likely to use statements of regret than Americans and that both groups used explanations/ reasons/ excuses more than any other strategies. Also, the socio-cultural transfer occurred in EFL learners' speech through their selection of semantic formulas, the length of their refusals, and the content of semantic formulas, reflecting values of the Arabic culture/ language transferred into English.

Al-Eryani (2007) examined the use of refusal among Americans and Yemenis. It found that there was evidence of cross-cultural variation in the frequency and content of semantic formulas used by Yemeni EFL learners in terms of contextual variables. The Yemenis were refusing indirectly using reasons and explanations other than their desire. On the other hand, the Americans employed different orders through placing "regret" followed by more direct refusals strategies. Salman and Ebadi (2015) conducted a study to examine the pragmatic transfer among Iraqi Arabic learners of English in response to compliments. The collected data analyzed according to Herbert's (1986) taxonomy. The study concluded that the Iraqi female EFL learners indeed transferred some of the expressions of their Iraqi Islamic culture when expressing compliments in English. Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) scrutinized how Jordanian EFL learners perceive pragmatic transfer in using refusal strategies, considering the factors of context and culture. The study concluded that there was a negative transfer in the refusal perception among Jordanian EFL learners due to reflecting the norms of their native language when communicating in English.

Dendenne (2017) investigated the pragmatic transfer among Algerian EFL learners in response to apologies. Data collected using a DCT was composed of seven situations and distributed to 32 Arabic native speakers, 20 English native speakers and 68 Algerian EFL learners. The results indicated evidence of pragmatic transfer in the content of the strategies and the literal translation. The socio-pragmatic transfer was also apparent in identically utilizing apologies to their mother tongue and culture when assessing the variables of particular
situations. Nonetheless, linguistic proficiency does not seem to be advantageous to high proficiency students. Furthermore, some factors influence the interlanguage production of learners, including insufficient pragmatic competence, particular interlanguage traits, and some native language restrictions.

Eldin (2018) investigated the pragmatic transfer in producing requests among Sudanese students. His study aimed at identifying the occurrence of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic transfer in their utterances. It found out that there were signs of socio-pragmatic and pragmalinguistic norms of the native language and culture when conceiving this speech act in English. The areas of pragma-linguistic transfer include Islamic greetings, prayers to their requestees, and some words, expressions, and structures translated in their English utterances. Also, it concluded that socio-pragmatic transfer emerged in areas such as consecutive detailed greetings, discursive techniques of their first language that disproportionately represent the reality of having rapport from others, kinship terms with strangers, and social distance and relation.

Al Refaee and Al-Ghamdi (2019) examined the link between negative pragmatic transfer and language proficiency concerning refusal as recognized by Yemeni EFL learners. Data gathered from 40 Yemeni EFL learners, 20 low proficiency learners and 20 high proficiency learners, and two baseline groups, 20 American native speakers of English and 20 Arabic native speakers, using DCT, which consisted of twelve scenarios. The study’s results manifested that there existed evidence of negative pragmatic transfer from the first language, particularly in terms of the frequency, content, and order of semantic formulas. They employed the strategy of “wish,” which is not widely shared in English, following the pragmatic pattern of their first language; however they use “gratitude/appreciation” and “positive opinions and feelings” less than their counterparts, again due to their native culture. Yemeni learners also displayed pragmatic transfer when employing intensifiers and horrific expressions. Nevertheless, it indicated that both Yemeni learner groups demonstrated evidence of pragmatic transfer; low proficient learners showed a much tendency towards the pragmatic norms of their first language compared to high proficient learners.

**Methodology**

**Research Design**

The current study is qualitative in nature, supported by statistical analysis to address the objectives of the study.

**Participants**

Non-probability sampling is widespread and realistic for researchers to apply when conducting intercultural studies. One of the types of this sampling is a convenient sample method whereby a group of individuals is selected, simply because they are easy to reach, and they are ready and able to be involved (Saunders et al., 2012). The study involved 35 female Iraqi female EFL learners and 35 female American native speakers of English. The Iraqi participants study the English language at the College of Education for Women, the University of Baghdad, while the American participants are students at Springfield College, Massachusetts, United States. The participants’ ages ranged from 24-37 years old. The researchers collected data in a timeframe of three months, February through May 2021.
The researcher analyzed the data according to directness, the most frequent semantic formulas, and adjuncts. Then, the researcher inspected the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic transfer in the responses of the Iraqi female EFL learners to figure out in what areas it might occur. A total of 1852 strategies were utilized by the two groups in refusing marriage proposals, and the findings were presented as answers to the research questions as shown below.

1. What are the most frequent strategies used by Iraqi female EFL learners and American English native speakers when refusing marriage situations?

Regarding directness and indirectness, Iraqi female EFL learners produced 943 refusal strategies, and American English native speakers made 909. To find the frequency of refusal strategies used by each group, the researcher calculated each type of strategy. A detailed description of the strategies is illustrated in Figure one.

Figure one: Types of refusal strategies used by Iraqi female EFL learners and American native speakers of English
It seems that Iraqi learners and American speakers had a similar frequency in the use of each type. The Iraqi female EFL learners utilized 126 direct strategies, 700 indirect strategies, and 117 adjuncts. The Americans, on the other hand, employed 129 direct strategies, 641 indirect strategies, and 139 adjuncts when they refused marriage situations. Both groups of participants preferred indirect strategies to refuse marriage proposals. As for the use of semantic formulas and adjuncts, a descriptive statistical analysis for the data is presented below based on the subdivisions of the three main categories of Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy. The research indicated that Iraqi female EFL learners and American English native speakers utilized different varieties of indirectly refusing the marriage situations. Such variation is summarized in Table two (Appendix B).

Table two displays that the most frequent semantic formulas used by Iraqi female EFL learners when refusing marriage situations is “excuse, reason, and explanation,” 24% followed by “statement of regret,” 15% then by “non-performative statements,” 12% subsequent “statements of criticizing the request, or requester” and “hedging” 8%, then “statements of positive opinion/feeling,” 7% followed by “statements of philosophy,” 6%, and finally “statement of principle” 5%. Table two also shows the least used strategies by Iraqi female EFL learners when refusing marriage proposals. These are “statements of empathy,” “promise of future acceptance,” “set conditions for past or future acceptance,” and “performative statements,” 1%, followed by “pause fillers,” 2%, following “statements of alternatives,” and “threat or negative consequences,” 3%, and then “appreciation and gratitude” 4%.

The semantic formulas employed most frequently by American native speakers of English are “excuse, reason, and explanation,” 18%, followed by “non-performative statements,” 11%, then “statement of regret” and “statements of criticizing the request, or requester,” 10%, next “statement of principle,” 8%, “statements of positive opinion/feeling,” 7%, followed by “appreciation and gratitude,” and “promise of future acceptance,” 6%. The semantic formulas less frequently utilized by the American English native speakers are “statements of alternatives,” 1% followed by “pause fillers,” “acceptance that function as a refusal,” and “let interlocutor off the hook,” 2% next “set conditions for future acceptance,” and “performative statements,” 3%, and then “statements of philosophy” and “hedging” 4%.

2. What areas of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic transfer may emerge in the refusals of Iraqi EFL learners?

The data collected from the Iraqi participants demonstrated that their refusals were affected by both their native language and culture. Many instances of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic conventions were in recognition of refusal in English. A thorough analysis of the pragmatic transfer phenomenon that emerged in the responses of the Iraqi learners is introduced below. The pragma-linguistic transfer instances are presented first, followed by those of socio-pragmatic transfer. Primarily, the data gathered displayed the pragma-linguistic transfer in the following areas:

Iraqi female EFL learners did a literal translation to original local expressions used in their first language to perform refusal in English. Lacking the pragma-linguistic awareness in the target language, Iraqi learners resorted to their first language to convey the meaning. These are pretty common expressions employed to refuse proposals in the local Iraqi Arabic language. For
instance, they translated some Arabic expressions, such as “a thousand of girls” to say “several girls,” “the last man in the world” to alternate its English equivalent “the only man alive,” and also “I envy the woman that will marry you” to express “the lucky girl to have you,” and many others. They resorted to their mother tongue rather than adhering to the target language expressions in this regard.

Iraqi refusal strategies contained many intensifiers like “really, so, very, quite, etc.” occurring across and within their responses. Such intensifiers function as softening devices forming a “hedging strategy” that emerged 8% among Iraqi learners and 4% among American English native speakers. Obviously, unlike the American participants who used these expressions in a relatively efficient way, Iraqi learners used them excessively and repeatedly to add emphasis and show the sincerity of what they say. This is related to the Arabic discourse rule in which repetition gives an empathic meaning to sentences. Thus, Iraqi learners returned to their mother tongue to emphasize rather than using those devices available in the target language. For example, in English, emphatic meanings take different structures such as passive voice, inversion, the use of the continuous form with “always, forever, etc.,” cleft sentences with it and what, and the use of did and do before the verb. However, Iraqi learners preferred to stick to that convention in their first language for this purpose. For instance, when expressing a genuine apology, they repeat the words “I am so so sorry,” to give the assertion.

Iraqi female EFL learners also used certain words in English to give the alternative meaning in Arabic. These terms are used differently in the two languages, yet Iraqi learners utilized them to express their intentions in this regard. They produced such words that they have learned in their textbooks, neglecting their inappropriateness for this interaction. For example, they applied the word “complicated” to describe a “difficult spouse,” or the word “roaming” to convey the meaning that the person proposing has several women “around,” also they used the word “concerning” to refer to the word “about.” The native speakers rarely use these expressions and phrases in realistic contexts.

Iraqi female EFL learners were prone to utilize compound and complex sentences when refusing marriage situations, a point of difference to the American responses, which were simple structured and contained fragments. Iraqi participants excessively employed compound sentences with coordinators like “and, but and so,” and complex sentences with subordinators like “that, which and because.” It can be related to the norms of the Arabic in which sentences are not necessarily separated by commas when writing. It does not matter if a sentence expresses one idea or contains a single verb and a simple structure. Examples are the following: “I can't accept you because I already lost my father because of smoking, so I can't lose you too,” another stating that “I can't trust you again, and I don’t give a second chance, so my answer is no,” and another saying “I can’t accept your proposal because it means that you will betray me with one of those women.”

On the other side, the effect of the Iraqi learners’ mother language and culture exhibited in the emergence of a socio-pragmatic transfer. They misconceived the target language’s social relations with each other, the social distance, and other points. The data displayed this kind of transfer in the following areas:
Iraqi learners inappropriately utilized some endearing terms copied from their native language to address those with close or distant relations equally. They made use of expressions like “sweetheart, honey, babe, dearie, and others,” which the natives use when talking to romantic partners, yet not in this sense. In the Iraqi Arabic culture, it is widely prevalent that the equivalents of these terms are used with anyone, whether family members, relatives, strangers, neighbors, or any others, as an attention-getter before stating the intended message. Thus, it is the erroneous translation of these terms from the native language; the Iraqi learners thought such expressions would carry the exact hue of the meaning of their equivalents in Arabic and thus employ them accordingly. In this regard, the Iraqi learners’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds influence the perception and production of the mentioned expressions.

Iraqi female EFL learners were prone to elaborate in refusing that their contents were too lengthy. Like in their first cultures, Iraqi learners substantially used more words for refusing, and usually, more than one strategy employed. Elaborateness seems to be a characteristic of Arabic in that the more one says, the more they make themselves apparent, and avoid misunderstandings. For example, in answering one situation, they tended to mention within the single response multiple reasons, several statements of philosophy and principles, extended positive statements, repeated statements of regret, gratitude, wishes, and hedging. Therefore, they resorted to their native cultural norms when expressing themselves using the target language.

Iraqi learners overloaded their refusal with statements of regrets, gratitude and wishes. They tended to apply these expressions at the beginning and the end of their refusal. For example, “Sorry, Sir. You are…… for this reason, I am sorry, …..” and “ I apologize. You are….. Sorry," “thanks for choosing me. I really appreciate your proposal…,” and plenty others. Here, Iraqi learners once again adhered to their native cultural conventions in using apologies, thanking and wishing statements multiple times to show their true feelings, and assure their interlocutor of the honesty of what they say. Repetition is a feature of Arabic culture that indicates the assertion and effectiveness of the speech. Thus, the use of such expressions is necessary for these kinds of situations, i.e., marriage, and that the more they are applied, the speech would sound polite, sincere, and faithful.

Iraqi female EFL learners tended to exaggerate the reality of circumstances believing that their interlocutor empathized with them. That would give a solid and convincing ground for turning down a proposal without hurting their interlocutors’ feelings or risking their face. For example, they used reasons like “my mum is very sick, there will be no one in my house to help her if I accept your proposal,” and “I have pregnancy issues and I am afraid that will deprive you of being a father.” Exaggeration is a common feature of Arabic cultures that makes speech sound more convincing to the hearer (Patai, 1983; Shouby, 1951). When refusing marriage situations, they sometimes do not give the real reason for rejection. They either use a series of typical answers or mention exaggerated reasons; hence sound fake. As a collectivist culture, Iraqi Arabic society puts weight on how one appears to be polite, considerate, and persuasive rather than honest and upright. These features have values in individualistic cultures like the Americans.

Iraqi learners strived to make pessimistic assumptions when refusing a marriage situation, apparent in utilizing the refusal strategy “negative consequences” to dissuade an
interlocutor. They consider setting many negative implications for accepting a proposal can work as a good, solid, and persuasive method for refusal. It is attributed again to the Arabic culture that they usually have their pessimistic view about the future. Their aspect of marriage is different from that of the Americans’, meaning that the Iraqi culture finds situations of marriage considerably based on what makes a compensation between cons and pros and the agreement on the terms that set earlier, usually determined by the families. In contrast, the target culture relates the acceptance and refusal of marriage based on love and loyalty, among other things.

Iraqi female EFL learners showed no significance for the social status of their interlocutor. Whether the interlocutor is from a high, equal, or lower status, they treated all the situations with indirect strategies oriented toward saving the face of an interlocutor. They were inclined to address the person of higher level with great respect and that equally happened to the situations when the interlocutor was from a lower status. It relates to the collectivist Iraqi Arabic culture that encourages people to respect the elders and be kind and delicate to their peers and the younger. The teachings of Islam stimulate people to treat all man-kinds with no difference based on any type of segregation. “Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you” is a direct and clear warning mentioned in the Holy Quran against treating people as superior or inferior because the best of them is the one who is humble and respectful.

Iraqi female EFL learners also resorted to their first culture in advising their interlocutors when refusing. It occurred in the marriage situations of the guy who smokes, and the person who has multiple relations; Iraqi participants offered advice to them to quit a bad habit, and to stop acting immorally. As a collectivist culture, Arab people typically warn one another from being involved in the path of evil, as the Islamic teachings instruct them to do so. It is a reminder to the addressee just in case they are ignorant or simply oblivious, as mentioned in the Holy Quran, that “And remind, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers.”

In their responses, Iraqi learners resorted to their first culture in formulating the nature of their reasons for refusals. Examples include “my family does not accept and I want to complete my study” or “my father refuses to let me marry someone from outside the family plus I am already engaged to my cousin.” In collectivistic cultures, they consider families as the central institutions that determine the marriage relations, a matter that is entirely dissimilar to individualistic cultures, like the American. In the latter, an individual is the one who makes such decisions on their own, not their families. Iraqi learners contributed their turning down for proposals as something that they cannot decree. It is a plain return to the mother culture in this matter, indicating a socio-pragmatic transfer.

Iraqi female EFL learners formulated “statements of positive opinions and feelings” about the person proposing in a way that is different from the American participants. Some examples of the Iraqis’ responses include “That is incredibly wonderful of you, you are a great person, and you are sweet,” “Any girl in my shoes would be more than happy to have a man like you as her husband,” and “You are really a nice guy. You are incredible. I am sure there are thousands of girls out there who wish to be with you.” It originates in Arabic cultures in general, where people tell each other kind words. They tend to praise one another directly and indirectly, and once more to display admiration and courtesy. It can also relate to the Islamic teachings that
“a good word is like giving elms,” mentioned in the Holy Quran, as well as “and speak kindly to all people.”

**Discussion**

The study’s findings revealed that Iraqi female EFL learners and American native speakers of English prefer to refuse marriage proposals indirectly. They employed several semantic formulas and adjuncts; the most frequently utilized by Iraqi learners were reasons/excuse/explanation, statements of regret, non-performative statements, while those favored by American native speakers of English were reasons/excuse/explanation, non-performative statements, and statements of regret and criticism. Such results conform to most of the studies in the literature review (Al-Shalawi, 1997; Al-Issa, 1998; Nelson et al., 2002; Al-Eryani, 2007). They both indirectly refused the marriage situation, considering no the social status and social distance. It seems that Iraqi learners and American English native speakers of English share the tendency to act indirectly by employing almost similar strategies that make their refusal sound persuasive and face-saving at the same time. However, the Iraqi refusal responses differed significantly from those of the Americans in several points. It can relate to the influence of their native language and culture. These areas of divergence included both types of transfer, whether pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic. The former occurred on the lexical and syntactic level when performing the speech act of refusal in marriage situations. It is demonstrated in the literal translation of expressions and words that are, in conformity with Eldin’s (2018) findings, commonly applied in the local Iraqi society; hence Iraqi learners transferred them from the first language rather than adhering to the ones most prevalent in the target language, English. They also transferred the syntactic structures of Arabic in performing refusal in the second language. They constructed their sentences with compound, and complex sentences instead of simple ones. They cling to the Arabic rules of adding the assertion to what is said rather than holding those available in the target language. Such findings indicate a lack of awareness considering the linguistic knowledge of Iraqi learners, particularly failure to employ precise and appropriate utterances and breakdown to exercise the structures of the target language in real situations.

Following that, socio-pragmatic transfer emerged in plenty more areas when refusing marriage situations that all reflected, in accordance with the findings of Huwari and Al-Shaboul (2015), the inclination of Iraqi learners to their Arabic culture’s conventions and norms. They employed endearing terms improperly, which suggests the removal of any distance that has to exist between interlocutors, in agreement with Eldin’s (2018) results. It explains that the local Iraqi society uses expressions of this kind to address members with whom the speaker has a distant relation or not. This function is entirely different from that of the target language. Iraqi refusals also displayed no significance for the social status of their interlocutor; believing, according to Islamic teachings, that people treat each other equally. Some features of Iraqi Arabic culture were further present in the learners’ refusal strategies, including elaboration, exaggeration, family orientation, repetition, pessimistic views, advice and praise. The findings reveal that the Iraqi learners elaborated when employing any refusal strategy, whether reasons, regrets, criticizing, or positive opinions and feelings, etc., in a way similar to the findings of Stevens (1993) and Al-Isaa (1998). They also exaggerated the real situations to make their speech, reasons for rejecting proposals in this case, more persuasive and face-saving. They further assumed that their interlocutor was aware of the role of the family in deciding blood and
flesh relations; therefore most of the refusal reasons were attributed to circumstances that they did not control, conforming to Al-Eryani’s (2007) results. Another point that is clear in the Iraqi refusal strategies is repetition in that they repeat several words, phrases, or sentences to serve different purposes like assertion and displaying sincerity. For example, they repeated statements of gratitude, regret, wishes, and others. Such findings go in line with Stevens (1993), who affirmed that there are multiple strategies employed when refusing; interlocutors scarcely refuse explicitly. Concerning opinions of marriage, Iraqi learners manifested the pessimistic Arabic views of the future by using a “negative consequences” strategy. It interprets the Arabic collectivist culture as it values mutual understanding and consensus for a successful marriage instead of the individualistic cultures, like the American, which approves love and loyalty for such situations. Lastly, there are two other characteristics of Arabic cultures transferred in the Iraqi refusal strategies into English; these are advice and praise. In Arabic societies, when people communicate, they tend to praise each other as indications of respect and politeness. They give advice to one another as signs of caring and consideration. Such results align with that of Salman and Ebadi (2015). All of the mentioned points are characteristics of collectivist cultures manifested in the Iraqi refusal of marriage proposals.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A refusal is a face-threatening act that demands interlocutors to manage their performance carefully. Interlocutors tend to protect their interlocutors’ face by refusing indirectly through utilizing various semantic formulas and adjuncts. Refusal is especially challenging for non-native speakers to accomplish as there is a high risk of unintentionally offending their interlocutors. Refusal of non-native speakers of English, like the Iraqi, may sound confusing to native speakers, due to the influence of their native language and culture, resulting in communication breakdown. The present study aims at inspecting the refusal strategies used by Iraqi female EFL learners, and the areas of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic transfer in marriage proposals. The findings suggest that there are similarities between Iraqi female EFL learners and American English native speakers in the preferred strategies used in refusing marriage proposals. Both of them favored indirect strategies, namely “reasons/ excuse /explanation,” and for the direct strategies, both utilized “non-performative statements.” However, Iraqi refusals hold indications of pragma-linguistic, and socio-pragmatic transfer of their native language that make their refusals dissimilar to that of the target language. Characteristics transferred from the Arabic language and culture include lexicons, syntactic structures, idiomatic expressions, on the one hand, and endearment terms, elaboration, exaggeration, family orientation, repetition, pessimistic views, advice, and praise, on the other.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that Iraqi learners' linguistic competence be developed by encouraging students to apply the grammatical rules they learn at school in their speech. They also need to be aware of the social and cultural norms of English when performing the speech act of refusal. The researchers also call for conducting more research to explore the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic transfer among Iraqi EFL learners. Future studies should focus on the speech act of refusal in marriage situations.

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References


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**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

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<th>examples</th>
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<td>Performative verb</td>
<td>“I refuse.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-performative statements</td>
<td>“No.,” I cannot,” and “I don’t think so.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect strategies</td>
<td>Statement of regret</td>
<td>“I am sorry,” and “I feel terrible...”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wish</td>
<td>“I wish I could help you”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Excuse, reason, or explanation</td>
<td>“My children will be home that night,” and “I have a headache”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Statement of alternative</td>
<td>“I can do X instead of Y.,” “I’d rather,” “I’d prefer,” “Why don’t you do X instead of Y?,” “Why don’t you ask someone else?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set conditions for future or past acceptance</td>
<td>“If you had asked me earlier, I would have”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promise of future acceptance</td>
<td>“I’ll do it next time.,” “I promise I’ll or “Next time I’ll”</td>
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### Appendix B

Table two. *Frequency and percentage of semantic formulas and adjuncts strategies used by Iraqi female EFL learners and American native speakers of English*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Refusal strategy</th>
<th>Iraqi EFL learners</th>
<th>American native speakers of English</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Adjuncts</strong></th>
<th>Statement of positive opinion or feeling or agreement</th>
<th>“That is a good idea,” and “I’d love to”</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of empathy</td>
<td>“I realize you are in a difficult situation”</td>
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<td>Pause fillers</td>
<td>“uhh,” “well,” “oh,” “uhm”</td>
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<td>Gratitude or appreciation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-performative statements</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Semantic formulas</strong></td>
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<td>Statement of regret</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wish</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excuse, reason, and explanation</td>
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<td>168</td>
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<td>Statement of alternative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set conditions for future, or past acceptance</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>A promise of future acceptance</td>
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<td>Statement of principle</td>
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<td>Statement of philosophy</td>
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<td>Threat, or statement of negative consequences</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criticize the request/requester</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let interlocutor off the hook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request for help, assistance, or empathy</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance that functions as refusal</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Adjuncts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement of positive opinion/feeling, or agreement</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Instructions: You are kindly requested to consider the following marriage proposals. Respond to them by refusing as naturally as possible as if you were in the actual situations:

[+distance/ +status]
1- A great guy, except that he is way too older than you.

2- A famous person who has a lot of female fans.

[-distance/ +status]
3- A guy, who is incredibly handsome but has no job.

[+distance/ =status]
4- A guy with good social-economic status except that he's a heavy smoker.

[-distance/ =status]
5- The husband of your best friend.

6- Your Ex who cheated on you.

[+distance/ -status]
7- A perfect guy, but has a physical defect.

8- A good guy but lives far in an insecure place.

[-distance/ -status]
9- A guy is known for his many casual relationships.

10- A guy with trust issues.
Krashen Revisited: Case Study of the Role of Input, Motivation and Identity in Second Language Learning

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Abstract:
Stephen Krashen has a long and enduring legacy in the field of second language acquisition. His “Input Hypothesis” was among the very first attempts to create a coherent theoretical account of second language learning. Krashen argued that learners can acquire language through the process of comprehending it. While elements of his model have been extensively critiqued, this idea has endured and offers teachers a clear mandate to provide learners with abundant opportunities to making meaning of the target language. Utilizing a case study of an English language learner, Krashen’s model is challenged and enriched by considering the role that motivation and identity play in learning. Teachers tapping into an important source of learner motivation, role models drawn from the local community or broader society, can inspire and energize students’ studies and help them visualize a life in which a second language plays a vital role. Building upon Krashen’s idea of the importance of language teachers and programs creating robust reading programs for a sustained engagement with second language print resources, the authors propose to expand his vision and include all manner of multimedia and technologies. However, such a program can only succeed if teachers mediate their learners’ social identities and motivations for sustained second language learning.

Keywords: identity, Krashen, linguistic input, motivation, second language development, reading

Krashen Revisited: Case Study of the Role of Input, Motivation and Identity in Second Language Learning

*Optimal input is comprehensible, compelling. There is a lot of it and the context is rich which means the context helps you understand the new input.* (Krashen, 2020)

I. Introduction

Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) have provided a consistent message over nearly forty years. The act of comprehending a new language, either through listening or reading, lies at the heart of second language (L2) development. Learners use linguistic input, the oral and written language found in books, movies and a multitude of digital sources, as the raw material to create an understanding of the patterns of a new language system. Crucially, learners must be able to make meaning of this input in order to use it for their own language development.

In this paper, we explore this insight and its implications for language teachers by turning to Stephen Krashen (1982,1985), who proposed a theory of second language acquisition that put comprehended input at the center of language learning. He connected the learning of a second (third, etc.) language to the same cognitive processes that we see in children learning a first language. The comprehension of contextualized input drives language learning. Since the 1980’s, Krashen has been a fierce promoter for this perspective and a tireless advocate for the powerful role that a well-designed second language reading program can and should play in an effective language program.

While learning theory can provide a broad and abstract perspective on language development, it is left to teachers to determine what it all means for their particular learners, in specific classroom settings. In this paper, to gain insight into situated language learning and teaching, we explore one of the authors’ own experiences of learning English in Iraq. This allows us to examine the intersection of three issues that we believe are central to second language acquisition: comprehended linguistic input, motivation and identity.

In the summer of 2020, the authors participated in a webinar with Stephen Krashen (Fahad & Krashen, 2020). AUTHOR-2, the organizer of the webinar, and AUTHOR-1, the invited discussant, had an opportunity to talk with Dr. Krashen about his ideas and explore some of their implications for classroom teachers. In this paper, we draw upon this conversation and Krashen’s current writings as well as AUTHOR-2’s story of his own language development in order to gain insight into the complex and messy business of language learning and teaching.

II. Revisiting Krashen

"The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production." (Krashen, 1982, P.7)
Stephen Krashen has a long and enduring legacy in the field of second language acquisition. His “Input Hypothesis” was the very first attempt to create a coherent theoretical account of second language learning. This theory proposed that learners develop second language competence primarily through the process of comprehending the target language. Krashen believed that much of language learning is subconscious and happens automatically when the learner is focused on meaning (Krashen, 1981). Krashen drew parallels between first language learning by children and second language acquisition by older learners, including adults. He argued that the mental capacities used by children in learning their native language are available for second language learning.

Krashen introduced a short-hand way to think about the type of input that actually promotes second language development: \( i^{+1} \). The symbol “\( i \)” refers to a learner’s current stage of language development; the symbol “\( +1 \)” is intended to capture the idea that learners require input that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level in the target language. While this concept is problematic for researchers (Ellis, 2012), many language teachers around the world embraced this conception of language learning as it provided a clear mandate for teachers: support your students as they attempt to make sense of new, raw linguistic material in the second language. For educators creating new curriculum, it illuminated a path forward: build a course or language program around students comprehending increasingly complex language structures.

While Krashen’s formulation of comprehensible input has proven controversial among linguists, which we discuss below, the idea that linguistic input comprehended by learners drives second language development is central to current theories of second language acquisition (Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Gass & Selinker, 2008). The human brain is wonderfully adept at finding patterns and regularities in data of all types, including language. As long as the learner is motivated to attend and make sense of incoming linguistic input, the fundamental condition for second language acquisition has been met. In this scheme, a central role of the language teacher is to support their learners’ attempts to make meaning of the new language.

Krashen also posited a component of the theory that he called the “affective filter.” If comprehended input drives second language learning, then anything that impedes learners’ access to input limits language development. With this component, Krashen introduced the role of learner emotion or “affect” into his theory. The “affective filter” functions metaphorically in this way; when a learner is feeling relaxed and safe, his filter is low and input flows easily and is readily processed. When a learner is feeling stressed, unmotivated or fearful, the affective filter is high and input is blocked or reduced which hinders language acquisition. While this device is simplistic in its mechanistic conception of the role of learner emotions, it did introduce this important variable into a theory of language learning.

Krashen’s theory challenged centuries of accepted second language pedagogy. Krashen urged teachers to abandon traditional classroom learning activities such as translation from the second language to student’ first language and students memorizing grammar rules, vocabulary lists and instructional dialogues. In their place, Krashen’s Monitor Theory proposed that primary learning activities center around learners’ engagement with oral or written language. The teacher’s primary job is to support students’ understanding of these second language texts.
III. Challenges to Krashen’s Theory

Several of Krashen’s key tenets have been challenged since their publication in early 1980’s. One element of Krashen’s theory that has not been embraced by researchers or educators is the idea that language production plays no significant role in language acquisition (Swain, 1995). In other words, Krashen has claimed that learners do not develop grammatical competence by speaking and writing. However, SLA researcher, Merrill Swain, cogently argued that language output has multiple functions in language learning, including providing learners with an opportunity to try out their own hypotheses about the new language.

Macky (2012) provides research evidence that suggests learner interaction in the second language can help them negotiate or clarify meaning which also facilitates second language development. Many teachers have been skeptical of the idea that students’ language use plays no significant role in learning based upon their own teaching experiences in the language classroom; student language production and use are bound up in complex ways with learner motivation, classroom engagement and the messy process of figuring out how a new language works.

Another problematic element of Krashen’s theory has been his formulation of i+1. While often embraced by classroom teachers, researchers have rejected the concept as ill-defined and untestable (Ellis, 2012; McLaughlin, 1987). How do we know that understanding a challenging new form in a language is learned when we use context to guess its meaning? What type of unit is “+1”? Many teachers around the world have classes of forty students, or more. How would it be possible to effectively teach to all their different i+1 levels? Krashen has captured an intuitive sense that learners must be challenged with new linguistic material that is not too far beyond what they can currently handle. However, in terms of a theory of learning, the concept is just too unclear to be tested through research, which is a fatal flaw in a field devoted to empirical research.

IV. Wonderful, Messy Success

Teachers have continued to embrace the concept of “comprehensible input” as a heuristic device for lesson planning. Krashen’s insistence that language production does not play a central role in second language learning has also been, in our estimates, successfully challenged (Swain, 1995). We do not intend to revisit these controversies in depth in this paper.

In many ways, Krashen’s theory has been a wonderful, messy success. It has provided the fields of second language acquisition and second language teaching with new insights into language learning and the role that teachers can play in that complex process. In the decades since its dissemination, it has inspired spirited debate and countless research studies that explored each claim that Krashen made in his original formulation. While aspects of his theory have been challenged, rejected or modified, his central insight that language input that is comprehended lies at the heart of second language acquisition has been widely accepted in the research field. However, this perspective has never been fully understood and accepted by classroom teachers.

We have come to believe that Krashen’s conceptions of second language development would greatly benefit from a focus on issues of learner identity and motivation. His concept of “affective filter” could be viewed as an attempt to explain how motivation factors into language
development. Low motivation would restrict the amount of input that is comprehended by a learner and, thereby, limits opportunities for engagement with the massive amount of input required for language development. The issue of learner identity and its role in second language development is not addressed by Krashen in the original theory or his subsequent writings.

In the next section of the paper, we explore our belief that identity and motivation are intertwined. These two concepts are central to the efforts of practicing classroom teachers to support and nurture language learning. We begin with a story by one of the authors of this paper of his own journey as a learner of English.

V. AUTHOR: My English Language Learning Story

I describe my learning of English as a foreign language as a self-learning journey. In the 1980’s, due to political reasons, English was not very well supported by the educational system in my country, Iraq. The Arab nationalism and anti-colonialism culture that Saddam Hussein and the Ba’ath party advocated for entailed that the English language was related to Western liberalism, the enemy. Due to this and later to the United Nations’ sanctions on Iraq, the educational system was deteriorating, and English language teaching and curriculum were very ineffective, resulting in low English levels for almost all Iraqi high school graduates.

In Iraq, English was typically offered at the fifth elementary grade. Our school had no English teachers since most teachers had to join the army at that time. However, since we had to take the Baccalaureate exam at the sixth elementary stage, our school principal assigned us an English teacher who was originally a teacher of history and knew very little about English. I barely passed the 6th grade province-wide exam that qualified me to enter middle school. My English literacy was close to nonexistent with a cursory knowledge of the alphabet and basic grammar patterns.

In 1993, I was sixteen years old with limited English skills and had to pass the second more difficult ministerial Baccalaureate comprehensive exam. I again barely passed. Besides luck in guessing with the multiple-choice questions; I was also fortunate to have been taught with an audio-lingual method. Our teachers coached us to follow clear rules: “If you see the auxiliary BE verb before a blank, choose a verb with “ing,” “Memorize lists of possible irregular past forms” and “Memorize a passage for writing the essay section.” No communicative component was needed in this exam.

The kick start for real and lasting development of my English skills started after graduating middle school. There was a story behind changing an English “nightmare” into a lovely dream! A one single event made me love English and decide that it would be the primary subject for the rest of my education. The story shows the power of one person to change one’s life.

After graduating the third intermediate grade which is a three year school after the elementary stage, I had a GPA that qualified me to enter the Dhi Qar Teachers Training Institute, a five-year program that prepares students to be teachers at the elementary school level. After I finished the third year, it was time to decide on a department that would be the subject of my future profession as a teacher.
Students had to attend a counseling session to be advised on what department to choose. The choices needed to be either Arabic language, English language, history, math or biological science. At that time, no student liked to go to the English language department as English was considered a difficult subject.

Mr. Ameer Doshi, the head of the English department and the counselor of that session, inspired me by his speech on the importance of English. He told us stories based upon his own life of the role that English has played and the power of English to open up our minds to the broader world. Teacher Ameer was known for his good teaching, kindness, and being close to students. Unlike most other teachers in the school, Mr. Doshi was a strong advocate of students and a big believer in their potential for success. After meeting Mr. Doshi, I started to have an interest in learning English. I became convinced that English was the best fit for me. My knowledge of English, however, was still very low.

As I started my first year in the English department, I was disappointed because I did not understand much of anything from the classes I was taking. I started realizing that there was a major difference between the Arabic language system and the English language systems. I thought I had to start from there. During the summer break of that school year, I spent much time figuring out how to improve my English. There were no computers or internet, and books were as rare as food at that time since the country was under severe UN sanctions (1991-2003). I accidently found an old shabby book in a corner of my mother’s room. It was a middle school English textbook and with the aid of some friends, I got another book, a worn-out English-Arabic dictionary that was compiled by an Iraqi English educator. Backed by my interest, need and influence from my teacher, I became very motivated to read these books. Not only did I read the stories, I also started memorizing all their vocabulary and analyzing their instructional exercises.

I also started realizing that I had a talent that would help me learn English. I made a plan to memorize a list of words every day during that summer and learn some basic English grammar. By chance again, a friend mentioned that he had some English novels and short stories that he found in his late father’s home library. He was more than kind to lend me several books in English. Henry James’ “A Portrait of a Lady” was my first prey! I could not believe that I was reading such a complicated novel. It took me four months to finish it, and I knew I would have not been able to read it without my bilingual dictionary. At this point I discovered that I had started to forget the meaning of many English words I had blindly memorized. Yet, I also found it was a daily occurrence to not know the meaning of many words that I came across while reading.

Extensive reading was an effective solution to this vocabulary challenge. It benefited me in two ways. First, I was able to store more words in my long-term memory as I read them in context. Second, it motivated my mind to look for strategies or mnemonics in memorizing words. I was good at using the association strategy and other cognitive connections that helped me memorize long lists of words. I think that most of my word reservoir is gained through funny associations of English words with personal experience and events of my life. Getting my eyes accustomed to long periods of reading greatly helped me not only to memorize words in context, but also to gain a sense of the language. As I was writing, I felt that I was unconsciously
adopting the writing styles and grammatical structures of what I was reading. All in all, I found that it was the combination of the motivation to learn and my active attention to my learning, as well as my burgeoning identity as an elementary English teacher that propelled my fluency as an English learner. It was this intersection that was central to my second language development and love of the English language.

My English language learning journey has given me insight and determined the path that I later took for my education and career. I decided to pursue my MA and later my doctorate in the area of bilingual education. I graduated with my doctorate in second language studies from a U.S. university. My goal as an educator is to dedicate my time and expertise to do research, training and other professional development services to enhance second language education in Iraq and elsewhere.

VI. Analysis of the AUTHOR’s Story

Using the story as our data source of a L2 learner experience, we analyzed the story in terms of Krashen’s theories and what it reveals about the nature of second language learning.

**Motivation, Intrinsic and Extrinsic:** The most striking significance of Krashen’s theories is his insistence on the power of reading to promote language development. To Krashen, those who read more are distinguished in their achievement of both their first and second languages (Krashen, 2004). However, many educators struggle with finding an answer to the question of how to motivate students to read more and this has not been satisfactorily answered by Krashen. Reflecting on The AUTHOR’s story, it can clearly be seen that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation played vital roles in his learning. The affective filter and the i+1 are inadequate to explain the sociocultural aspects surrounding learners’ motivation to learn. The Affective Filter Hypothesis states that a student would be limited in their ability to acquire a second language if there were some sort of barrier, such as fear or fatigue, blocking them, even though everything is in their favor to learn it. The ‘affect’ in the theory’s name refers to a student’s feelings, motives and mental state. A learner who is tense, anxious, or bored may ‘filter out’ input, making it unavailable for acquisition” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 37). Students’ motives and feelings about learning another language greatly affect the way we should instruct our English language classrooms.

In the case with the AUTHOR, we see the power of reading in English as it provided the only readily available source of the second language. However, the limited reading materials, lack of effective English formal education and his low basic literacy skills in English are just a few of the challenges he faced. What looks like “intrinsic motivation” actually has social roots. The AUTHOR’s drive to learn English was greatly influenced by his teacher, Mr. Doshi, a model of a successful English learner, as well as family support and encouragement. The AUTHOR’s motivation to master English was directly related to his future image of himself as a teacher of English. This resonates well with what Donyei described as a “future L2 self” in which learners’ motivation is sparked and sustained by imagining themselves in the future as competent speakers of English (Hadfield & Dornyei, 2013).

Part of the AUTHOR’s success in acquiring his second language was due to the inspiration he got from his teacher, whose speech in that counselling meeting helped eliminate
the hesitation the AUTHOR had in deciding on which department to go. The affective filter theory offers no explanation on the social factors we saw in the AUTHOR’s experience. In his critique of Krashen’s theories, Zafar (2009) argues that the affective filter is not adequate to account for larger social factors that impact learning. Krashen did not attempt to explain the many social variables (Block, 2003; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) surrounding his theory, leaving it unconvincing when others test it empirically like what we do in this study.

The teacher in the AUTHOR’s case offered positive modeling and encouraged higher self-efficacy for his students. According to Zimmerman (2013) self-efficacy and self-regulation often come from observing teachers, followed by the support and encouragement of learners.

**Identity**: Social identity plays a central role in second language learning (Norton, 2006) and motivation is closely connected to identity and the many sociocultural factors surrounding it. The AUTHOR went through different stages of identity shaping due to both internal and external motivators. That could be explained in terms of Donyei and Chan’s (2013) perspective of identity which he called the ‘ought-to L2 Self’. When family and friends began to refer to the AUTHOR as “the translator” or “the teacher,” this was a source of encouragement; it also instilled in him a feeling of uneasiness as he sought to be as others perceived him, his “ought to be” self.

That sense of identity led to a higher self-efficacy in his learning which was seen in his learning autonomy and the learning strategies he adopted to cope with the limited resources which were available for him. According to Donyei and Chan (2013), the ‘ought-to self’ is associated with avoiding negative results which in the AUTHOR’s case meant not working hard enough to acquire the English language or not being academically successful.

**Learning autonomy**: The social-economic and geo-political circumstances in which the AUTHOR lived left him with limited resources to access linguistic input or decent formal learning. Consequently, the AUTHOR’s motivation around the “ought-to self” forced him to rely upon self-learning as the only resort and in this case proved effective.

**VII. Implications for Classroom Teachers**

Research into second language learning can provide a helpful guide for classroom teachers with insights into human memory and learning processes. However, teachers are often left to themselves to figure out the research’s implications for their own students and contexts. In this section, we discuss three powerful implications for classroom teachers that can build upon this research base.

**Comprehended Input**: Language teachers can greatly enrich their teaching practices by increasing the amount of classroom time devoted to learner comprehension of the target language. The texts, carefully selected for topic and complexity, provide the basic input that learners need to grow their linguistic knowledge and skills. Teachers have two primary responsibilities in these input type lessons. First, they must engage and work with their students to select appropriate second language texts. These may be drawn from a diverse range of options: novels, non-fiction texts, movies, television, radio, audio tapes, social media, computer programs and other types of digital resources. Teachers can help their learners locate authentic or
pedagogical classroom texts which are carefully controlled for topics suitable for their learners and language that is appropriate for their language proficiencies. This work is done by teachers in the lesson planning phase and in class discussions with students.

Second, teachers must be prepared to facilitate the comprehension of the texts by introducing parallel source(s) of meaning through class discussion, translation, gesture, image, realia and so on. It is critical to keep in mind that it is not the introduction of a text that sparks language learning but the comprehension of that text. In the language classroom, teachers and students can work together, drawing upon whatever local resources are available, to support meaning making (Hall, 2019).

Teachers too often neglect this critical component of classroom learning: meaning making. This is where the art of teaching comes into play. The ability to help one’s students comprehend a foreign text draws upon teaching competencies that highlight the particular skills and knowledge that classroom teachers possess of their students’ second language proficiency, literacy skills, interests and passions and local community and broader culture in which they live.

Stephen Krashen identified input in second language acquisition as the essential element in the language learning process. He has developed and tirelessly promoted the idea of the power of a well-planned reading program. Krashen believes that reading in a second language is a very significant tool in bilingual education. He proposes a program, *Free Voluntary Reading (Krashen, 2011)*, in which language students gain access to a new linguistic system through extensive reading. When students read in a second language it can increase literacy skills and develop vocabulary and grammatical competence. This program can be used for young or older learners and has two key features: 1) learners select reading materials on topics they have genuine interest in; 2) learners have easy access to these materials.

This type of program is consistent with Krashen’s focus on the importance of exposure of language learners to massive amounts of second language input that is comprehensible. This approach is based upon Krashen’s belief that the most efficient path to developing second language competence is to draw upon learners’ subconscious processing capacities. He refers to this as the “easy way” to learn a language and contrasts this approach to the “hard way” in which learners use conscious processing methods, such as memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules.

We can expand upon Krashen’s idea of a reading program and include all manner of multimedia. Teachers and students can navigate together to gain access to the diverse range of language resources that have the potential to capture learners’ attention and promote learning.

*Teaching Implications*

#1: Teachers should create, with their students in their language classes and programs, a robust linguistic input program to support second language development.

#2: Teachers’ primary responsibility is to facilitate meaning making as students encounter challenging second language oral or written texts.

#3: Teachers must continually assess student comprehension in order to determine that students have truly understood class texts.
The nice thing about these three implications is that the classroom teacher has direct control over each. While nothing can be done in the classroom without the cooperation of students, these elements fall well within the normal practices of teachers, supported by schools and communities. Teachers, with their intimate knowledge of their students, are well positioned to select texts, facilitate meaning making, set up reading programs, and so on. However, the challenge that many teachers face is that a sizable proportion of students are not highly motivated to study second languages. As we saw with the AUTHOR’s story, issues of identity and motivation became intertwined in ways that directly impact language development.

Motivating Learners: Teachers have long been in the business of motivating their learners, using a range of rewards and punishments. The AUTHOR’s story reveals the ways that apparent intrinsic motivation such as a strong ambition to succeed may have roots in what is usually thought of as extrinsic motivation. Humans are profoundly social beings and even characteristics that are thought to be part of the personality of a person may have originated in the family or broader cultural environment.

The AUTHOR’s story reveals both the power of Krashen’s theory and its limitations from the point of view of classroom teachers. It is clear that his self-directed reading program was instrumental in his development of English. However, the source of his motivation can be found in the inspirational model his teacher provided and the ways that his identity as a successful English learner positioned him within his own family and community.

Teaching Implications
#4: Teachers should tap into an important source of learner motivation: Models drawn from the local community or broader society to inspire and energize students’ studies and help them visualize a life in which a second language plays a vital role.
#5: Teachers should actively engage students in dialogue and reflection around the development of new identities as second language learners and users.

VIII. Conclusion

Language programs in schools around the world are unique in the particular learners enrolled, the cultural context of the school and the particular moment in time the teaching and learning take place. Local classroom teachers are responsible for shaping a learning environment that is effective for their students. They are in debt to Krashen and the many researchers who have contributed to our growing understanding of this enormously complex process.

And yet, teachers must reach beyond these abstract theories and create classes that are effective for their complex, imperfect learners. Krashen’s theory points teachers toward a program of massive, comprehended input. The AUTHOR’s story suggests ways that social context, including teachers, family and community, play a fundamental role in the learning process by mediating social identity and motivation required for sustained second language learning.

About the Author:
Dr. Francis Bailey is the Director of the TESL MA Program at the University of Kentucky, U.S. He has conducted research on second language acquisition and challenges faced by English
learners due to differences between home and community ways of learning and knowing and the academic and social demands of schools. Dr. Bailey focuses on the role that social and cognitive processes play in second language learning and the implications for classroom teachers. 

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9558-0751

References
Book Review

Cognition and Language Learning

Editor: Sadia Belkhir
Authors: Kamila Ammour, Katia Berbar, Amel Benaissa, Sadia Belkhir, Fatima Zohra Chalal, Hanane Ait Hamouda, Georgios Georgiou, Nora Achili, Sadia Belkhir;
Book: Cognition and Language Learning
Publisher: Cambridge Scholars Publishing
Date of Publication: 01/03/2020
Pages: 171
Reviewer: Nadia Idri
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It is quite vital to study issues related to a complex phenomenon as the human language, but it is attention-grabbing to be focused on aspects related to cognition. The cognitive side of language analysis and study can cover a wide range of aspects namely language processing, vocabulary, memory, attrition, metacognition, etc. Sadia Belkhir comes to offer an interesting combination of themes related to cognition in language learning. The collection includes scholars who attempted to analyse diverse topics related to a number of key cognitive factors in the field of FLL in different learning contexts.
Sadia Belkhir has been devoted to cognition and learning strategies for years and this gave birth to this volume. The book fluctuates between a theoretical body of literature related to cognitive aspects of language learning and practical considerations through fieldwork research. This equilibrated material in terms of cognition in language learning research can serve as a guideline to graduate and postgraduate students, novice researchers working on cognition in language learning, teachers, practitioners, and researchers at large.

The edited book is published in March 2020 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. The volume is divided into nine chapters and contains 153 pages. The topics included in the contributions treat diverse though complementary information related, but not limited to cognition per se, metacognition, attrition, perception and ability, memorisation. In addition, authors treated various linguistic aspects namely vocabulary, reading, speaking, phonetics, discourse, literature, and technology.

The opening chapter written by Sadia Belkhir serves as an introduction to the edited book. It relates language learning to cognition, but English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in particular. The author presents a rich theoretical background and explains explicitly the shift from behavioural to cognitive theories of language learning, and offers a wide range of research conducted on the field of cognition. The chapter is the gate of the book since it covers a general account of the book, its objectives, and chapters.

The more we go through the chapters, the more narrowed down the topics are. This second chapter presented by Kamilia Ammour treats metacognitive awareness in narrative texts. The author focuses on reading literary texts and the way learners use their metacognitive awareness and reading strategies. It should be noted that reading literary texts needs a specific type of strategy use. Kamilia tries to explore strategy use and its frequency through a case study using a survey. The author’s findings are revealing. Students are found to use reading strategies to interpret texts but are limited to the word level. The author concluded that learners lack metacognitive awareness and use reading strategies in an inefficient way. Hence, students can face problems in tasks and activities related to “critical reading comprehension” often present in EFL classes.

As for Zohra Chalal, she selects one aspect of language and relates it to attrition in a particular context. In other words, the author works on vocabulary attrition in a multilingual context specific to the Kabyle region in Algeria. Using a test, Zohra tries to find out whether “the savings paradigm as a method […] assumes that once a word is learned, there are residues of knowledge that can be used to reactivate it”. Findings revealed that it is easier and faster to recall the English vocabulary learned at ease in the past than new vocabulary even though the respondents stopped using English. The savings method can be effective, according to the findings, to prevent attrition since it helps the language user to retain the already learned
vocabulary in English. This research is quite interesting for workers in the field of vocabulary learning and use.

From vocabulary learning, the book moves a step forward to a specific type of writing. Sadia Belkhir treats the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) as a method to promote written discourse through the identification of metaphors. The author through her experimental study performed with graduate and postgraduate students tried to analyse MIP's possible influence on their cognitive capacity to distinguish metaphors in written text. Sadia could find that MIP is a method that partly assists subjects in the recognition of metaphors, and knowledge about metaphors is partly memorised by most subjects. For her, this witnessed problem can be remedied by daily practice in metaphor identification in discourse.

The book has not only treated one aspect of language or one particular language. Georgios P. Georgiou to uncover the perceptual patterns of Arabic in relation to the vowels of Greek as an L2 among adult speakers. Through his experimental design, the participants passed through vowel assimilation and vowel contrast discrimination tests (AXB). The discrimination test was also undertaken by a control group consisting of Cypriot Greek speakers. The study revealed interesting findings regarding the listeners’ perception and the assimilation of vowels. That is, the author implies that the listeners’ native language has a strong effect on the perception of the second language vowels. Georgios ended the chapter with the salient place of stress as a meaningful part of second language perception.

When dealing with cognitive strategies, one cannot deny skills related to memory, retention, and information retrieval. The sixth chapter of this volume related such skills to cognitive abilities. Amel Benaissa suggests techniques to develop such skills through using online quizlets and digital flashcards. Amel favours the use of Quizlets and digital flashcards given their positive role in turning learning online for students to develop their cognitive skills on the one hand, and develop their vocabulary in English on the other at all the information-processing stages. The author worked her quasi-experimental design with first-year university students to test the effective retention and retrieval of new words. To measure the lexical development of the students, pre and post vocabulary tests were used. Results showed that participants who were exposed to computers and to the mobile version of the Quizlet website could develop better their vocabulary, but less effective for the Quizlets programmes.

Nora Chilli comes to treat the question from another perspective. She tries to relate students’ perceptions of success and failure to the attribution theory. Through her trial to understand EFL students’ perceptions, she tries to shed light on the impact of past experiences of success and failure on future language performance; which are more likely bound to cognitive processes namely when approaching failure. Through her case study, she worked with advanced Algerian EFL learners (N°= 62) adopting a quantitative method through a causal attribution questionnaire. Her findings were revealing since the participants attributed their success to
external factors like supportive family and friends, but they focused more on internal factors such as motivation and personal effort. As for failure, they attributed it to both internal and external causes by referring to task difficulty and poor teachers for external factors, and lack of effort and poor learning strategies as internal reasons.

Always under the lines of cognitive processes, Katia Berbar tied the phenomenon to an affective factor, which is anxiety. In her thesis, she advanced its debilitating effect because of the demanding nature of FLL and the complexity of language performance and academic achievement. That is why; both affect and cognition play a complementary role to succeed in a satisfactory achievement. Katia relates anxiety arousal to cognitive activity through monitoring the learning process (input, processing, and output). Her work tries to measure the anxiety level at each learning stage in order to diagnose its impact on cognitive processes. Through her quantitative method via questionnaires handed to first-year EFL students (N°= 65) enrolled at the University of Tizi-Ouzou, she could handle data using a descriptive approach. Findings revealed high levels of anxiety in the three stages of learning (input, processing, and output). According to her, “anxiety arousal at the input stage prevented learners from understanding vocabulary items in the target language. At the processing stage, anxiety impaired students’ cognitive ability. Anxiety at the output stage obstructed the retrieval of the previously studied material and precluded learners from communicating in English”.

The last chapter Hanane Ait Hamouda studies perception in relation to code-switching in the EFL context. The study treats the way students perceive code-switching in the language classroom in order to see whether they approach it negatively or not in terms of the cognitive process while producing English. The quantitative method was employed via online questionnaires answered by graduate students at the University of Tizi-Ouzou. Results indicated that EFL classes in the selected context of this research do not have a pure target language environment and the students perceive the non-pure English language environment positively. Additionally, code-switching in EFL classes does not alter the students’ language production process.

Sadia Belkhir could gather pertinent papers from EFL contexts to tackle cognition in language learning. The book can be an interesting reference to students, teachers, action researchers, doctoral students, and workers in the field of cognitive strategies in language learning and teaching. Besides, the book Sadia offers can serve as a comparative source with other published materials in other parts of the world. This can incite discussion, constructive criticism, and replication of studies in different contexts.

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