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The Impact of Teaching Approaches on Students’ English Language Learning in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Saudi University

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Abstract:
This study investigates the effect of teaching approaches on students’ English language learning at King Abdulaziz University (KAU). Moreover, it is an endeavor to know the difference between students' interaction with the teaching approaches used by Non-Native English Speaking (NNES) lecturers and those used by Native English Speaking (NES) lecturers. A documentary review, observations, and semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students served as the data sources of this study, as per the qualitative case study approach. The interactions with students and teaching approaches of the lecturers varied in accordance with their native tongue—NNES lecturers and NES lecturers. The findings have revealed that the level of students’ interaction was less during the lectures delivered by NNES lecturers due to the adoption of a teacher-centered approach. Significantly, the level of students’ interaction was high during the lectures delivered NES lecturers. This is due to the fact that NES lecturers adopted a learner-centered approach.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, Higher Education, Saudi EFL learners, Teaching Approaches, Teacher-centered Approach, Learner-centered Approach, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Society places a special onus upon higher education. Newman and Couturier (2002) state that not only does higher education sustain the welfare of society but it also serves as the driving force of the economy, the generator of future leaders, and the disseminator of knowledge. Modernisation and development are widely acknowledged to be inextricably linked with higher education worldwide. Skills development, quality, curricular and social relevance, global competitiveness, and equity are addressed in part, as Altbach et al. (2009) state, by higher education which, in turn, is subjected to significant demand. Saudi Arabia, like many other countries, perceives the role of higher education in enhancing national prosperity.

Moskovsky and Alrabai (2009) observe that increasing attention is paid to English language learning and teaching in the nation’s educational system within the context of enhancing education quality. Anteriorly, English was the sole foreign language taught in the country, formerly only being learned at secondary and intermediate levels. Darling-Hammond (2006), Al-Seghayer (2013), and Al-Shannag et al. (2013) highlight that English learning is prioritized in the present, reflected by its teaching in the first grade. Nonetheless, Syed (2003), Alrabai (2010), and Albousaif (2011) note that at each level of learning, Saudi students generally display a low level of English aptitude, as per the consensus of language researchers.

Research Questions:
This study is an attempt to answer the following main question:

- How do the teaching approaches affect students’ English language learning in King Abdulaziz University (KAU)?

It also seeks to answer the following sub-questions:

1. How do the teaching approaches used by Non-Native English Speaking (NNES) lecturers affect students' interaction?
2. How do the teaching approaches used by Native English Speaking (NES) lecturers affect students' interaction?
3. Is there a significant difference between students' interaction with the teaching approaches used by Non-Native English Speaking (NNES) lecturers and those used by Native English Speaking (NES) lecturers?

Research Objectives:
The present study attempts to achieve the following main objective:

- To know the impact of the teaching approaches on students’ English language learning in King Abdulaziz University (KAU).

It also seeks to achieve the following sub-objectives:

1. To know the effect of teaching approaches used by Non-Native English Speaking (NNES) lecturers on students' interaction.
2. To know the effect of teaching approaches used by Native English Speaking (NES) lecturers on students' interaction.
3. To know the difference between students' interaction with the teaching approaches used by Non-Native English Speaking (NNES) lecturers and those used by Native English Speaking (NES) lecturers.
Literature review:

The available literature on higher education EFL learners reflects the importance of the teaching approach used in English classes. In this context, many studies like Prosser (1999), Entwistle and Smith (2002), Muller et al. (2012), Ahmed (2012), and Cochransmith et al. (2015) hold the perspective that student learning experiences in higher education are substantially impacted by the teaching approach used when teaching. As Evans (2000), Norton et al. (2005), and Troudi et al. (2009) note, the perception regarding assessment procedures, teaching, knowledge, and students that the lecturers possess is reflected by the distinct philosophies behind the teaching approaches, such as constructivism or behaviorism. Javed (2017) uses the term teaching strategies to define the teaching approaches used by English language teachers in higher education, and she states that English language teachers in Higher education are not trained to use teaching strategies. In this context, Tang (2020) states that teaching of English as a foreign language is always a challenging task.

Teaching Approaches in Higher Education

Dall’Alba (1991), Martin and Balla (1991), Martin and Ramsden (1992), Samuelowicz and Bain (1992), and Kember and Gow (1994) numbered among the academics investigating the link between lecturers’ teaching approaches and the same lecturers’ perceptions regarding learning and teaching, in the 90s, within higher education programs. Other scholars like Entwistle and Peterson (2004), Kember et al. (2008), Ahmed (2012), and Alhawsawi (2013) note that student learning in higher education is impacted as a result of the teaching approach selected by the lecturer who, in turn, is influenced on the topic of assessments, students, and roles by their perspectives.

Various teaching approaches are used by lecturers in higher education. This is one aspect conveyed broadly in the literature, despite various academics diverging in their representation of the teaching conceptions (Kember, 1997; Prosser et al., 1994). Teaching as knowledge transmission and teaching as an engagement process are categorized as teaching at the lowest and highest levels, respectively. Irrespective of student needs, the syllabus is imparted literally alongside personal knowledge to the students by lecturers who view themselves as knowledge disseminators. Teaching approaches by such lecturers often involve monologues and reliance on textbooks.

Teacher-Centred Approach

The importance of reproducing lecture-transmitted knowledge in its precise form and other learned behaviors is elevated in this approach. It is linked to the principles behind behaviorist philosophies. Via the process of information retention by passive listening, the students play the part of an empty cup to be filled by the lecturer’s knowledge, where the lecturer possesses absolute authority. Hence, as Hancock et al. (2002) and Ramsden et al. (2007) observe, the lecturer denies the students a chance to express their needs or views while presuming they know what the students should learn. The lecturers, in this case, are not only responsible for the knowledge disseminated to the students but also function as gatekeepers to the knowledge.

Student-Centred Approach

It is thought that as a response to the teacher-centered approach, the student-centered or student-focused approach came into being. Schweisfurth (2011, 2013) argues that the whole-class
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The instructive role that teacher-centred lecturers fulfilled is foregone in favour of a facilitative role where the creation of knowledge is shared between the lecturer and the learner, aligning with principles of constructivist philosophies. The focus is placed upon the learners rather than the curriculum or the lecturer themselves such as in the teacher-focused approach. High-quality learning is fulfilled via the constructive interactions between the content, lecturer, and learner being prioritised within the process of learning and teaching.

The principal elements of the teacher-focused and student-focused approaches are outlined in the table1.

Table 1. Teacher-centred versus student-centred approaches

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<th>Student-centred Approach</th>
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<td>View of learning</td>
<td>Accretion of knowledge via rote learning and memorization</td>
<td>Helping students attain, construct, and practise knowledge and evolve skills.</td>
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<td>Lecturers’ roles</td>
<td>Authoritative role as a knowledge disseminator</td>
<td>Co-constructor and facilitator of knowledge</td>
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<td>Views about students</td>
<td>Passive receivers of knowledge that is conveyed from textbooks and lecturers</td>
<td>With previous knowledge and experience, proactive actors and creators of knowledge</td>
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<td>Teaching strategies</td>
<td>Pedagogy based upon lectures</td>
<td>Group work, classroom discussions supplement proactive teaching</td>
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<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Define and multiple-choice questions characterize the assessments that evaluate the students’ recollection of behaviors and the accretion of knowledge</td>
<td>Open-ended questions characterize the assessments that evaluate the practical implementation of the learning skills learned throughout the course</td>
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Note 1. Developed by the researcher

Distinct Studies Regarding EFL Teaching Approaches in Higher Education

Multiple academic works have studied EFL learning and teaching in higher education and the teaching approaches used in such a setting. With particular attention placed upon Asia and the Gulf area, various academic works are examined in this section. Within a public university in Pakistan, the extent to which students’ learning experience was impacted by distinct pedagogical approaches was studied (Ahmed, 2012). Within English classes, the effect of distinct teaching strategies adopted the impact of such approaches on engagement, the perception of lecturers’ teaching approaches and attitudes held by the students were demonstrated by the results of said study.

Inspiring students to participate in the process of co-constructing knowledge and motivating them to become proactive actors is perceived to be a primary part of facilitating learning by the lecturers that adopt a student-centered approach within higher education in KSA. Alhawsawi (2013) conducted a study on this topic and he found that students from poorer
backgrounds were less suited to the student-focused approach than those from a privileged backgrounds as the latter possessed more cultural capital.

Within the context of higher education in KSA, the challenges EFL lecturers experience was examined in a separate academic work (Ansari, 2012). The findings revealed that student-focused approaches cause a significant portion of Saudi students to struggle in the learning process. The lack of preparation in the pre-university education system to learn in such a manner was attributed as the principal cause. Melibari (2015) notes that active involvement and participation by students in the class are not promoted or stimulated by the education system, in KSA, which usually tends toward authoritarian and prescriptive teaching methods. Thus, teaching approaches reliant on textbooks and teachers are considered the norm for Saudi students.

Methods
This study analyses the impact of the teaching approaches on students’ English language learning in King Abdulaziz University (KAU), Saudi Arabia. It used qualitative methods, which provided the opportunity to collect detailed data that would otherwise be difficult to obtain by quantitative methods.

Participants
Twenty students were chosen via purposive sampling. Moreover, seven EFL lecturers that taught in distinct semesters and of distinct experience levels and ages were interviewed. Four of the lecturers were from Saudi Arabia while three were NES from the United States and the United Kingdom.

Research Instruments
A documentary review, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students served as the data sources of this study, as per the qualitative case study approach. Printed documents, such as the EFL objectives and programme design, gathered from the administration of the university’s Department of English Language, KAU policy documents regarding higher education and the Saudi educational system, and open access electronic documents released by the Saudi Ministry of Education-Higher Education division (MoE-HE) served as the two primary sources of documentation.

Research Procedures
Interviews were carried out in English or Arabic, as per the respondent’s preferences, and they took place in the department. Interviews that were spoken in Arabic were transcribed after being translated. Classroom observations took place to cross-reference the interview data. On certain occasions, we were asked to engage in classroom activities after being allowed to observe lecturers and students in the classroom. The actual social reality of the students in the classroom was better conveyed via this inclusion. The data was analysed after one month of gathering. The data was organised into a singular primary theme—pedagogic tactics employed by EFL lecturers in class and their impact on student learning—via the NVivo software.
Findings

Overall, a teacher-focused approach is implemented by most NNES lecturers, as per the analysis of the data. The lecturers’ conception of their role and the students’ role influence their selection of teaching approach. Furthermore, large class sizes and deficient cultural capital, which often stems from an altogether lack of English language background, are among the structural problems that lead to such a teaching approach being implemented. On the other hand, student-focused methods best describe the teaching practices implemented by the NES lecturers, in contrast to the NNES lecturers. The teaching responsibilities NES lecturers are given by the department and their perspectives on the role of students and lecturers elucidate the aforementioned premise, as discussed below.

Discussion

**NNES Lecturers’ Perspectives Regarding their Roles, Students, and Teaching**

The significance of the textbook in the teaching method of NNES lecturers, is elevated as they comprehend their role as knowledge disseminators. Thus, they perceive their function to be conveying to the students the contents of the textbook. The mentioned teaching technique is predominantly teacher-focused. The role of the students and the lecturer is communicated by Lecturer 2 (L2). Conveying the contents of the syllabus is seen as the principal role of the lecturer. In this case, the students are the receptacles of the knowledge imparted by the textbook and lecturer that act as the sources of knowledge. The knowledge disseminated by L2 is expected to be understood and recalled by the students as attention focuses on the lecturer’s own knowledge which is supplemented by the textbook. Furthermore, L2 opines in the same interview that the syllabus can only be changed by the lecturer, thereby denying the students any participation in the decisions of what they are taught. (NNES Lecturer 2, Interview). This result supports Melibari (2015) who stated that the education system in KSA usually tends toward authoritarian teaching methods.

Similar to L2, Lecturer 5 (L5) conveys his viewpoint that all lecturers should follow the textbook as students that acquire its knowledge have the best chance of passing the test. Moreover, L5 views the textbook as the principal source for the course and that it must be followed upon teaching the programme. This demonstrates how L5 is reliant on the textbook for class-based activities and lesson preparation as well as the necessity to absorb the textbook’s contents to pass the final exam. The textbook must be followed precisely and thus, the opportunity to have a say in the learning process is denied to the students (NNES Lecturer 5, Interview)

Another point of contention is the negative attitude many NNES lecturers hold towards the EFL program students, as revealed by the interviews. In this respect, students that lack cultural capital as they come from lower-middle-class families, make up a significant portion of the EFL program students. Such students encounter significant difficulty meeting the linguistic and academic demands of the program as they presume that the program will teach them English without prior knowledge of the language. Lecturer 4 (L4) highlights the complete mismatch in English language levels, where as few as ten are prepared to operate at the expected level or higher while roughly 90 would have zero prior knowledge of the language and expect to learn English from zero. L4 states that this unversed majority come with erroneous expectations about the
programme and that the vast majority wouldn’t pass the programme despite the lecturers’ efforts to give them a chance by teaching the basics (NNES Lecturer 4, Interview)

The large number of students per class is an additional issue negatively impacting NNES lecturers’ teaching strategies. The total number of students played a pivotal role in how Lecturer 4 (L4) taught their classes, where larger classes, sometimes numbering over 30, would disqualify the chance of doing discussions, mini-presentations, debates, and other such speaking activities. L4 attributed this to such methods being ineffective given the skills of novice learners forcing the lesson plan to shift to teaching listening. This hindrance in teaching also impacted teaching reading where L4 conveyed that their usual practice of allowing in-class students to read aloud excerpts, and they would be corrected where necessary, was impossible in larger classes and often led to silent reading in class and further tasks to do at home. This point is similar to that roved by Muchiri and Kiriungi (2015) who observe that the teaching strategies adopted by lecturers are impacted by large class sizes.

Thus, NNES lecturers circumvent the problems presented by larger class sizes by turning to teacher-focused teaching approaches, as L4 shows. First, the choice to teach listening was enforced as L4 could not develop the speaking skills of the students with so many presents in the listening and speaking class (NNES Lecturer 4, Interview). Hence, the vital language skill of speaking was given little to no chance of developing. Equally, English excerpts were read silently as in-class student reading was perceived to be impossible with so many students. The fact that group or pair work in such large class sizes was not proposed by the lecturer to address these challenges is most intriguing.

**NNES Lecturers’ Teaching Practices in the EFL Classroom**

Teacher-focused strategies largely encapsulate the teaching practices adopted by NNES lecturers. A teaching strategy based on lectures was adopted by all NNES lecturers on top of the dependence on textbooks, per the data. A system of teaching that is not two-way communication but rather one, in large class sizes, is frequently seen in higher education systems in Saudi Arabia and is viewed to be a repetitive and bland teaching style. This style is employed by L5 who only provides the opportunity for students to ask questions at the end of their class while using the textbook and slides in a lecture format to convey to the students the concepts and topic of the lesson (NNES Lecturer 5, Interview).

Conveying instructions to the students when in class is an additional teaching practice adopted by NNES lecturers. This is exemplified by L2 outlining how they express to the students in the first class of each semester that if the students follow L2’s instructions, they will pass the course, and if they don’t, they will fail and only have themselves to blame. These stringent instructions imply that good learners are those that follow the instructions and bad learners are those that do not. Thus, the chance for students to negotiate their learning is denied by this teaching practice despite L2 stating that this method is to facilitate the learning of the students (NNES Lecturer 2, Interview).
Students’ Learning Experiences of the Teacher-Focused Approach

Multiple students communicated their negative stance towards the NNES lecturers’ teaching methods despite such strategies supposedly being more suitable for the English language background of most of the students and a majority of them are thought to come from lower-middle-class backgrounds. Given that the best opportunity to develop and practise their language skills and knowledge is in the EFL classroom, it is reasonable to suggest that most students find it worrying when such opportunities do not appear. Before entering the job market and graduating from the EFL program, the need to acquire the requisite knowledge and develop sufficient skills is known to the students. Worries about the progress of their skills and learning stemmed from the awareness that much of their future depends on it. Students 7, 12, and 15 convey such sentiments stating that a better job and a bright future are provided by the degree and learning the language, communication with diverse people and finding a job are enabled by learning English, and it’s a severe issue if the requisite English writing and speaking skills are not attained at courses end as their future depends on it, respectively (Student 7, Interview, 2nd year; Student 12, Interview, 4th year; Student 15, Interview, 2nd year).

The inability to interact or take part in the construction of knowledge was perceived by multiple students from less privileged backgrounds within the teacher-focused approaches. Regarding the classes of a NNES lecturer, Student 2 (S2) expresses irritation at the overload of knowledge transmitted in the class. The restricted time to practice the language and the overload of theoretical knowledge left S2 discouraged. S2 conveys the desire for more actual language practice and that their personal interest in the class waned as too much information was crammed into a small time. After 20 minutes or so, S2 stopped absorbing the information (Student 2, Interview, 4th year).

The teaching strategies implemented in a reading class by a NNES lecturer are criticized by Student 3 (S3). The lecturer is said to tell the students they are wrong or must stop each time they make a pronunciation mistake when reading a textbook one by one. The correction of such errors, as Lightbown and Spada (2013) highlight, links to a behaviouristic comprehension of EFL learning and teaching whereby novel habits are reinforced. Nonetheless, self-confidence and motivational levels can be negatively impacted in the students by such methods. This ultimately causes students to be reluctant to participate, and this point is similar to that presented by Martinez (2006) who states that reluctance in participating or providing answers rises when negative or excessive feedback is given, at times discouraging students from developing their capabilities. Enjoying classes and having fun beneficially impact students’ learning which is reflected by S3’s desire for the classes to be more gratifying, educational, and fun (Student 3, Interview, 3rd year).

Resultantly, reluctance to engage and express opinions was experienced frequently by the students. This result is similar to that found by Allamnakhr (2013) who notes that it is generally thought that a student could fail the course by questioning the content the lecturer disseminates and thus, it is not a common occurrence in Saudi higher education. This is evident in the case of Student 15 (S15) who highlights the risky nature of questioning or challenging the NNES lecturers. The students end up becoming risk-averse by not challenging the lecturer, especially as the lecturer could feel humiliated after being corrected by a student. Active, complete engagement in the EFL
classroom is deterred, as S15 highlights, in the case of a student who persistently disagreed with the lecturer before being told to be quiet (Student 15, Interview, 2\textsuperscript{nd} year).

Additionally, Student 19 (S19) describes how students worry that their grades or ability to pass the course will be impacted by criticising the NNES lecturers’ teaching practice and thus, refraining from doing so (Student 19, Interview, 3\textsuperscript{rd} year).

Nonetheless, a small portion of the less privileged students conveyed that they preferred the teacher-focused practices. This is exemplified by Student 20 (S20) who values the guidelines provided by the textbook and prefers to depend on such content. As a result, S20 knows what knowledge and skills to acquire exactly, and this illustrates how such strategies benefit less privileged students in some cases (Student 20, Interview, 3\textsuperscript{rd} year).

The teacher-focused practices adopted by NNES lecturers were criticized by many of the more privileged students. Such criticism stated that the unique needs and prior knowledge of the students were not considered by these teaching practices. In a reading class conducted by one NNES lecturer, Student 1 (S1) highlights the complete drain on interest provoked by overdependence on the textbook and a deficiency of classroom interaction. S1’s perception of the lecturer was impacted by their frustration in not being able to read what they like. Resultantly, the lecturers’ rigidity is viewed as a shortcoming and the teaching practice is used to cover it. S1 conveys their strongly held view that learning materials should be chosen by the students, which would occur when they become a teacher (Student 1, Interview, 2\textsuperscript{nd} year).

Similarly, Student 14 (S14) stated that they were barely challenged by the materials used by the NNES lecturers. Thus, the prior skills and knowledge of the students seem to be ignored in the lectures adopting teacher-focused practices. Consequently, the teaching style is uniform as students are assumed to be at equivalent levels. The desire for novel materials to stimulate students looking to further their English Education was expressed by S14, particularly because the standard material offered subpar explanations (Student 14, Interview, 2\textsuperscript{nd} year).

The formal manner of interactions between the NNES lecturers and their students was generally perceived by the more privileged students. Student 9 (S9) compares the NNES and NES lecturers of the EFL programme noting how the NES lecturers encourage the students to express their opinions and challenge what they say. Conversely, S9 and S3 alike describe how the NNES lecturers do not welcome or like challenges or acknowledge their errors, and the former even highlights that due to such lecturers possessing a post-graduate degree, they dislike being questioned. This demonstrates that the lecturers’ attitudes are perceived by the students. Notably, the lecturers’ aversion to being challenged could stem from the desire to maintain credibility as EFL lecturers and avoid displaying weakness. All in all, students end up preferring to remain quiet and are deterred from engaging completely in these classrooms. Arnold and Brown (1999) note that learning a second language is hindered significantly by such sentiments.

Overall, teaching practices adopted by NNES lecturers reflect the teacher-focused approach. Students should passively absorb the knowledge transmitted by the lecturer, and the lecturers are primarily knowledge disseminators, as per these lecturers’ perceptions. Frequent
teaching practices include reliance on textbook usage, providing stringent instructions, and lectures. Large class sizes, deficient English skills and knowledge, and other such structural issues impact these practices, as per the findings. Moreover, the authoritative and formal style characterising the interactions between the students and NNES lecturers in the EFL classroom reflected the particularly asymmetric power relations between the two.

**NES Lecturers’ Perspectives Regarding their Roles, Teaching, and Students**

The active involvement of students in the process of learning is considered vital by the NES lecturers who perceive themselves as facilitators in the learning process, as per the observational and interview data. The speaking and listening aspects of the course, named the communication language skill courses, are most likely wilfully placed under the purview of the NES lecturers by the department’s administration, according to the data. As outlined in the department’s documents, the mentioned courses are taught in the initial stages of the EFL program. This implies that the responsibility of helping new students acclimatise to the linguistic and academic demands of the EFL program largely falls upon the NES lecturers. This is exemplified by L1 who perceives his role as a facilitator of the students’ learning process while also aiding their transition from secondary school students into professional university-level students that think critically. Teaching the students novel manners of thinking is an expressed aim and L1 also conveys the principles behind intellectual property so that the students can avoid committing plagiarism (NES Lecturer 1, Interview).

The significance of building good relationships with students is elevated by NES lecturers, thereby helping them facilitate the students’ transition. When respect, interest in student progress, and empathy are shown by the lecturers, students’ motivation to learn, attitudes, and sense of well-being are enhanced (Sánchez et al., 2013). This is reflected by the sentiments of L6 who advocates lecturers putting themselves in the shoes of the students and prioritizing them. L6 highlights the importance of fostering very positive attitudes toward the language by making them feel at ease (NES Lecturer 6, Interview).

The interview data reveal a shared theme among the NES lecturers, namely, a strong sense of empathy. Efforts are made by such lecturers to transcend the traditional cultural barriers, present in Saudi higher education, that pervasively impact interactions and the student-lecturer relationship. Therefore, attempts are made to build a rapport that goes beyond the classroom setting by NES lecturers with their students. This is exemplified by L3 who states that he takes the role of a father figure to the students, recognising their need for help and guidance. L3 undertakes his office hours in the University Park for the comfort of the students and also states that students are invited weekly to discuss literature at a restaurant close by.

**NES lecturers’ Teaching Practices**

Presentations, discussions, group and park work, debates, and other teaching practices reflect the student-focused approach that NES lecturers implement, as per the data. To enhance the quality of their teaching, NES lecturers emphasise the significance of receiving student feedback. Active engagement and participation by students in the classroom are promoted by the adoption of the mentioned practices. Topics are discussed and debates take place between students organised into groups in the classes conducted by L1, as L1 outlines. L1 focuses on getting the
students to practise their English language skills, even with just simple phrases, as L1 views this as their biggest challenge. The issue of large class sizes is overcome by this teaching practice.

Enriching student interactions with more English content as a means to further develop the communication and language skills of the students is prioritised by L1. As a result, L1 disagrees with the practice of using Arabic in EFL classes, conveying that such a practice is detrimental to the students. While the difficulty is higher when explaining concepts in English, L1 believed that by providing sufficient examples and encouraging the use of English-to-English dictionaries, students could ascertain the meaning of concepts while expanding their vocabulary and language skills.

The individual learning habits and views of the students were deduced by L6 via the process of listening to students’ feedback. L6 learns this by listening to what the students are interested in, what they aren’t interested in, and how they learn. A focus on evolving the critical thinking of the students by broadening their perspectives is stated by L3 who views the lecturer as a facilitator of this. Moreover, L3 teaches an advanced literature course on top of the basic language course, and in the former course, L3 describes the challenge of aiding the students’ comprehension of distinct literary themes as well as helping them analyse texts critically. The lack of knowledge of the diverse forms of critical analysis is thought to be linked to the students’ cultural attitudes, as per L3 (NES Lecturer 3, Interview). This result agrees with Al-Sagoube (2009) and Kafe (2009) who state that the lack of any development and training of critical thinking skills in the students’ previous education leads to the mentioned deficiency.

By focusing on the student, NES lecturers do not depend entirely on the textbook, unlike the NNES lecturers that follow it systematically. This is exemplified by L1’s stance on the textbook, considering it to be a suggestion-based guidebook where L1 decides which topics to cover as per their student feedback, experience, and knowledge. Language is made comprehensible to the students as L1 simplifies novel ideas and concepts while verifying that the students understand throughout the lesson (NES Lecturer 1, Interview).

**Students’ Learning Experiences of the Student-Focused Approach**

The student-focused approach implemented by the NES lecturers received widespread positive feedback from most of the students, as per the data. This is exemplified by the high activity and involvement of the students in the informal and interactive classes of the NES lecturers, according to the classroom observations. During the lesson, ideas and questions could be expressed or asked at any point by the students. Student 9 (S9) communicates that the ability to express their opinions was a right respected and given to the students, where disagreements are welcomed by the NES lecturers (Student 9, Interview, 2nd year).

The communication skills of the students were enhanced by the high quantity of English interactions that the interactive classroom environment facilitated. S2 conveys that their language learning was enriched and enabled by their introduction to non-Muslim lecturers that only carried out interactions in English. Furthermore, the chance to interact with more advanced peers through group and pair work as well as classroom discussions led S2 to feel that their language skills were positively impacted by the practice of only speaking English (Student 2, Interview, 4th year).
The sentiment that the teaching practices adopted by NES lecturers are tangibly developing the skills of the students is conveyed by Student 18 (S18). S18 is aware and excited by the continual development of his writing skills while also expressing enjoyment in the class. S18 notes their excitement in learning new things, noting the long-term benefits of their trajectory, and praises the NES lecturer for bringing about such development (Student 18, Interview, 4th year). Littlewood (2007) states that the student-focused approach is characterised by facilitating the enjoyment of students in the learning process.

As aforementioned, positive attitudes toward the target language are fostered in the students by the NES lecturers. These positive attitudes are generated in the students via the strong ties such lecturers build in their relationships with the students. Markedly improved grades and the sensation of loving the language were expressed by Student 20 (S20) who attributes these changes to the teaching ability of the NES lecturers. S20 describes how prior to this, they struggled with the EFL programme in their first year of the course where NNES lecturers were the sole teaching source (Student 20, Interview, 4th year).

Nonetheless, the student-focused practice implemented by NES lecturers received some criticism from certain less privileged students. Nevertheless, unease with speaking English in class and the heightened awareness that all other students are paying attention to the language used and errors made is conveyed by Student 10 (Student 10, Interview, 2nd year).

To conclude, student-focused teaching practices are adopted by NES lecturers. The active participation and engagement in the classroom by students is a primary objective of such lecturers who perceive themselves to be facilitators of the students’ learning process. The teaching practices of these lecturers include presentations, debates, group and pair work, and other such pedagogical strategies. The learning needs and process were topics that the student felt they were free to express their views about which was enabled by the less formal and comfortable environment generated in such classrooms.

Assessment

In the case of both the student-focused or teacher-focused approaches employed by NNES and NES lecturers alike, the standard practice of assessment in the EFL programmes is not so clearly demarcated as in the previous sections. This section is discussed independently as assessments occur in line with policy. The practices and policies of the university substantially impact the assessment practices in the EFL programme. The assessment practices adopted by both NES and NNES lecturers are principally influenced by large class sizes, negative attitudes toward students, and students’ low levels of English language proficiency. Resultantly, the diverse courses within the EFL programme are assessed via written exams that are primarily content-based and multiple-choice questions.

Thus, the assessment process of the lecturers did not appear to adhere to the teaching approaches implemented by the lecturers, despite assessment practices usually taking place per such approaches. The large class sizes in the EFL programme are a significant factor influencing assessment practices alongside the institutional influence exerted upon the EFL programme. As a consequence, a majority of lecturers use multiple-choice questions in the exams and the fact that little time and too many students are attributed to be the cause is seen as an excuse by NNES L5.
NNES L5 further details how essay-type questions disappeared some years ago and lecturers preferred to not waste time marking papers. Similarly, the complexity of supervising and assessing 40 students in each class is expressed by NES L6. Given the time-consuming nature of the assessments that take time away from teaching, NES L6 favours multiple-choice questions to aid in the process of assessing so many students while remaining time-efficient (NNES Lecturer 5, Interview; NES Lecturer 6, Interview).

Hence, assessments that principally evaluate the knowledge recollection and memorisation skills of the students regarding the course’s contents are the principal forms of assessment. Less privileged students with less developed language backgrounds are more likely to pass the course through such assessment practices, despite the general negative impact on students’ language skills that these practices exert. The study technique of memorising as much as possible before the exam is a tried, tested, and successful method that S5 employs. This demonstrates that passing the course at times only required that the students memorise the textbook’s contents before the exam. Similarly, replicating the information of the key points of topics likely to appear via frequent revision and memorisation of the textbook is a favoured technique adopted by S7 (Student 5, Interview, 3rd year; Student 7, Interview, 2nd year).

Notably, various NES lecturers outlined how the learning and teaching process was supported by the assessment practices that fuelled their continuous assessment of the students. In contrast, other EFL lecturers employed such practices solely as a means of evaluating the achievement levels of the students. The former perception of the assessments is embodied by NES L1 who views such assessments as an integral component of the teaching and learning process. Via a mix of summative and formative assessments, where the latter takes place through the semester and the former occurs at the end, NES L1 learns of the strengths and weaknesses of the students in a continuous stream of feedback. Presentations, quizzes, and assignments make up the formative assessments and the teaching-learning process is enhanced by the reception and results of such practices, as per NES L1. NES L1 conveys that whether the intended learning outcomes of the course have been achieved is reflected by the summative assessment (NES Lecturer 1, Interview). The student-focused approach is embodied by this form of teaching that enacts continuous assessment.

**Conclusion:**

This research has investigated the effect that the teaching approaches have on students’ English language learning in King Abdulaziz University (KAU). The results have shown significant effects of these approaches on the students’ language learning. It has also been revealed that the interactions with students and teaching approaches implemented in the classroom differed between the NNES and NES lecturers. Moreover, large class sizes, students’ lack of English backgrounds, and the perception of the roles of students and the lecturer were among the factors leading to Saudi lecturers implementing a teacher-centred teaching approach. The study has revealed that NNES lecturers have used the teacher-centered approach since they prioritised disseminating the knowledge from the syllabus to their students. Consequently, stringent instructions were expected to be followed by the students and formal lectures characterised their classes. Passive learning through near-silent listening and note-taking typified the learning process in these lessons. On the other hand, a student-centred approach was implemented by the NES
lecturers. This has led to most of the students expressing positive attitudes toward the student-focused approaches adopted by NES lecturers.

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**References**


Perceived Acceptance of Enacting Google Docs in an Online Collaborative EFL Writing Classroom

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Abstract
Despite a plethora of studies on the use of Web 2.0 technology in the English language teaching (ELT) landscape during the Covid-19 pandemic, few have examined the extent to which students accept the enactment of Google Docs (GD) for collaborative writing. To fill this void, grounded in Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory (Davis, 1989), this study aimed to examine students’ perceived acceptance of GD enactment as a means of online collaborative English as a foreign language (EFL) writing practices. It sought to answer the following main research question: How did the students react to the enactment of Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Perceived Usefulness (PU), Attitude towards Using (ATU), and Intention to Use (ITU)? The statistical evidence indicated that GD was user-friendly and useful for the students given the overall Mean score (M=6.0) and the significant effects of all the hypothetically tested variables, significantly influencing their behavior and intention to use the technology. The qualitative evidence showed that internet connection was their sole challenge and that more practical training on using GD would help them better operate it for such a pedagogical purpose. The study encapsulates the feasibility of enacting GD as a medium of online collaborative EFL writing practices in the age of the Covid-19 pandemic. Further research examining the acceptance of GD and other dependent variables, such as learning outcomes, engagement, motivation, and etc., in ELT context would be worthy of investigation.

Keywords: Covid-19, collaborative writing, English as a foreign language, English language teaching, Google Docs, second language, technology acceptance model, online, writing

Introduction

Covid-19, a deadly variant of SARs-like virus, originated in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, has resulted in the closure of all schooling activities since April 2020, marked by the stipulation of the pandemic status by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Djalante et al., 2020; Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021). Such a viral crisis has caused adverse impacts on education (Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021), not to mention on the English language teaching (ELT) sector across the globe, as it forced the teachers to shift their face-to-face (FTF) instruction to a total online in an unprepared way. This learning condition is widely recognized as “remote teaching” (Shin, 2020).

Such a learning condition has significantly adversely affected the ELT sector unprecedentedly. (Mardiah, 2020) unveiled that English teachers and learners encountered some learning barriers, such as inadequate access to the internet and technologies, low students’ motivation and engagement, and inadequate social and psychological interactions between the students and teachers, which worsens the digital divide (Shin, 2020). This, however, should be seen as the catalyst for English teachers or instructors to be innovative and creative in executing their pedagogical practices in the classroom. Hence, numerous pedagogical alternatives have been proposed to effectively carry out the English language instruction amid the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, a special issue of ELT during the Covid-19 was published in one of the most prominent Journals, TESOL Journal, that provided pedagogical insights for English teachers across the globe to adopt. These include using an online literature circle for online reading instruction (Ferdiansyah et al., 2020); native and non-native English speaking teachers cooperation (Yi & Jang (2020); video-based teaching practicum for pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers (Cho & Clark-Gareca, 2020); and video conferences for EFL learners (Moorhouse & Beaumont, 2020). Nonetheless, all the proposed pedagogical measures cannot be applied to a particular pedagogical context due to various contextual issues, especially those dealing with EFL writing instruction. In addition, most studies on ELT in the Indonesian educational landscape focused on investigating the challenges of English teachers and students (say, Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Mardiah, 2020).

English writing instruction, particularly at an Indonesian Islamic University, where this study was carried out, resembles a similar learning condition amid the Covid-19 pandemic, where a lack of writing practices or input remains the primary concern. Even under the normal situation, writing in English is generally conceived as the most challenging skill to teach and learn (Azis & Husnawadi, 2020; Husnawadi, 2021) due to the adequacy of learning hours and the intricate process of mastering this productive skill. However, with the advancement of technological devices, Web-2.0 technology, such as Google Docs (GD), a free word processing tool produced by Google Inc., such learning conditions could be effectively facilitated. This online learning platform has been widely used to mediate collaborative writing (CW), joint authorship of texts among the second language(L2) learners (Godwin-jones, 2018; Storch, 2019; Limbu & Markauskaite, 2015). Incorporating such technology also attests to CW in writing classes (e.g., Liu et al., 2018; Cho, 2017). The notion of CW is critical to be incorporated into online instruction amid the Covid-19 pandemic because it could foster the students’ communication, lessen their work overload, and develop teamwork (Yen, 2020). On the other side of the coin, technologies play the most critical role in learning during the pandemic because of their friendly, flexible, and safe learning environment affordances (Li, 2021). Nonetheless, their use would not promote
certain learning outcomes unless users willingly accept their implementation (Davis, 1989). For that reason, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was employed in this study as the underpinning framework to explain and evaluate the use of GD, allowing the examination of the level of the writing students’ acceptance of its enactment and the pre-set variables contributing to their acceptance (Davis, 1989) (see the theoretical framework for more details).

The caveat highlights CW's contextual and theoretical significance for marrying CW and GD based on the TAM framework during the Covid-19 pandemic. First and foremost, GD can be enacted for online collaborative writing practices. Secondly, although a plethora of studies has sufficiently documented the use of the Web 2.0 technology in ELT landscape during the Covid-19 pandemic, few have examined the extent to which writing students accept the enactment of GD for collaborative writing in the EFL writing context, particularly in the realm of the Indonesian Islamic university. For these reasons, drawing on the TAM model (Davis, 1989), this study aimed to examine the perceived acceptance of writing students on using GD as a means of collaborative writing in an online EFL writing classroom in the age of the Covid-19 pandemic at an Indonesian Islamic university.

Based on the rationales above, the following research questions guide the whole part of the study:

1. How did the students react to the enactment of Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Perceived Usefulness (PU), Attitude towards Using (ATU), and Intention to Use (ITU)?
2. What were the students’ challenges for using Google Docs as a means of collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic?
3. How could the use of Google Docs as a means of collaborative writing in English be enhanced during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study drew on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory, which has gained buzzwords in the education context since a few decades ago. Developed by Davis (1989) from the theory of reasoned action (TRA), it has been widely adopted, adapted, and expanded as the underpinning theory to explain pedagogy mediated technology in a multitude of educational settings (e.g., Masrom, 2007; Cheung & Vogel, 2013; Shih, 2004). It encapsulates that the two most important factors, perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU), significantly determine users’ attitude toward use (ATU) and intention to use (ITU), which eventually actualize the system use (ASU) of the technologies, signifying the users’ technology acceptance (Davis, 1989; Cheung & Vogel, 2013). PU pertains to the belief that using technologies help improve work performance, while PEU refers to the degree of user-friendly use of the technologies to perform particular tasks (Davis, 1989). Other external factors as the antecedent variables to TAM are also included in the theory (see figure 1 as quoted in Masrom, 2007, p. 3).
This model has been expanded for various technological pedagogical purposes, for example, TAM and e-learning (Masrom, 2007); TAM and Collaborative technology (Cheung & Vogel, 2013); TAM and internet utilization behavior (Shih, 2004). The current study, however, adapted Masrom’s (2007) TAM and e-learning model (see figure 2) due to the similar research purposes, examining the core latent variables of the TAM model, while excluding the antecedent variables, such as external variables, including the actual use of the technology.

Based on the diagram above, five hypothetical relationships were formulated:

H1: Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) significantly affected the Perceived Usefulness (PU) of Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.

H2: PEU significantly affected the Attitude towards Using (ATU) Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.

H3: PU significantly affected the ATU Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.

H4: PU significantly affected the Intention to Use (ITU) Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.

H5: ATU significantly affected the ITU Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Studies on TAM in ELT Landscape

Due to its significances in predicting the users’ technology acceptance, a plethora of studies have applied TAM in the ELT landscape (i.e. Hsieh, Huang, & Wu, 2017; Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2017; Huang & Teo, 2021; Mei et al., 2017; Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021; Mei, 2019; Tsai, 2015; Fattah Soomro, 2018). Using TAM to evaluate the use of LINE apps for flipped oral English instruction, Hsieh et al. (2017) discovered that the system characteristics positively affect PU and PEU, but PEU did not positively affect PU. Another statistical result showed that both PU and PEU positively contribute to the ATU, while ATU significantly determines the ITU of LINE use in the flipped learning for English oral instruction. Another study by Hsieh et al. (2017) investigating the overall perceived acceptance of LINE for Flipped instruction unveiled that the students positively
perceived the use of the technology given the Mean (M) score of ITU ($M=3.80$), ATU ($M=3.73$), system characteristics ($M=3.72$), PEU ($M=3.69$), and PU ($M=3.60$) (p.11). Huang and Teo (2021) examined the effect of technology policies and constructivist pedagogy belief on English instructors’ intention to use (ITU) technologies from fifty-nine Chinese universities. It was found that all the measured TAM variables were positively contributed to the English teachers’ ITU technologies. Similarly, A qualitative investigation of TAM of Thai EFL lecturers by Kampoookaew (2020) found that all the TAM variables positively affected the ITU technologies in their classrooms. Likewise, Mei, Brown, and Teo (2017) examined the factors influencing the acceptance of CALL 2.0 used by Chinese EFL teachers. Unlike PEU, PU significantly affected the ITU of the Chinese EFL teachers to use the CALL 2.0 technologies.

The abovementioned studies generated distinct causational outcomes because of the contextual factors, such as the different uses of technologies, e.g., LINE, CALL 2.0 technologies, and pedagogical approaches. For the same token, although this study adapted Masrom’s (2007) TAM and e-learning model to evaluate the use of Google Docs for collaborative English writing practices, the students would perceive it differently; hence, generating distinct research outcomes than that of the previous studies. Secondly, although TAM has been widely adapted for various ICT-based instructions in the ELT context, deploying the theory to examine the enactment of Google Docs for collaborative English writing practices amid the Covid-19 pandemic in the EFL landscape remains scanty.

**Technology and Collaborative Writing in ELT Context**

Current L2 instruction has witnessed profound impacts of technologies on the classroom, not to mention L2 pedagogy for the last few decades (Hyland, 2003). The significances include promoting interaction and collaboration in and beyond the classroom, including students’ L2 writing skills. They have influenced writing practices in many positive ways, allowing learners and teachers to present ideas using PowerPoint, Blogs, and numerous social media, such as Facebook, and Twitter, to mention a few (Otto, 2017). The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, such as Wikis, Blogs, and Google Docs, has contributed to the novel means of mediating collaborative writing instruction, which affords the students to jointly construct texts beyond the schooling wall regardless of the space and time (Yim & Warschauer, 2017).

Storch (2013; 2019) defines CW as a co-authorship of texts involving more than one individual, engaging them throughout the process and production of the texts. Kessler (2017) states that the incorporation of CW into L2 writing classrooms is much affected by Vygotsky’s social, cultural learning theory, in which knowledge is seen as the product of joint social practices.

CW-mediated technologies have gained increasing prominence and are currently being applied in L2 or English classrooms (Kessler, 2017). Bikowski and Vithanage (2016) unveiled that the group taught using the CW approach outperformed their counterparts in the solitary writing group. Another finding also showed that the students preferred collaborative to individual writing. Similarly, Limbu and Markauskaite (2015) examined how the students perceived online collaborative writing (OCW) effectiveness. It was found that the collaborative online learning environment promoted task division, collaboration, idea generation, and writing skills. Likewise, Zheng and Warschauer (2017) argued that employing multimodal technologies promotes
collaboration, interaction, and textual authorship than being executed individually. Writing mediated by technologies escalates students’ engagement and interaction.

Drawing on the abovementioned studies, it can be concluded that web-based technologies for CW have been attested to empirically promote students’ writing skills than solitary writing through peer feedback, engagement, and interaction in and beyond the classroom where the teachers act as the facilitators of learning. For that reason, the current study employed an online collaborative writing approach during the Covid-19 pandemic, during which physical attendance is forbidden to curb the spread of the deadly virus. Concerning writing instruction during the covid-19 crisis, Google Docs can be enacted as a medium of collaborative writing that may engage students and teachers and peer interaction and feedback (Zayapragassarazan, 2020).

**ELT amid the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Covid-19, which originated in mainland China, Wuhan, in late 2019 has brought about unprecedented impacts on the education sector (Daniel, 2020; Yi & Jang, 2020), especially on the ELT landscape. The emergence of the deadly virus has been predicted more than a decade ago by Cheng et al. (2007), who warned the Chinese government in their article highlighting the possible re-emergence of the SARs-Cov like a virus as the “only time bomb” (see Cheng et al., 2007). The ignorance has resulted in the pandemic status stipulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) on April 11, 2020 (Djalante et al., 2020), imposing the physical and social distancing procedure, thrusting the shutdown of all schooling activities (WHO, 2020). With regard to the Indonesian education context, all the schooling activities have been subject to be carried out online following the decree stipulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia on March 24, 2020, forcing the teachers to move their instruction online without any preparation. Such a sudden shift of instruction is generally termed “remote teaching (Shin, 2020). This learning condition has been found to widen the so-called “digital divide,” the gap between the technologically advantaged students and their disadvantaged counterparts (Shin, 2020). Also, it has resulted in the lack of access to learning, technological and pedagogical skills, motivation, engagement, and stressful learning conditions (Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, this situation should be seen as a challenge for English teachers to rejuvenate their pedagogical practices (Shin, 2020; Yi & Jang, 2020). As a result, numerous pedagogical panacea in the realm of ELT during the Covid-19 have been offered, which include “International Society for Technology in Education” (ISTE) (Morgan, 2020, p. 134); Flipped Classroom (Khan & Abdou, 2020); Blended Learning (BL) (Godwin-Jones, 2020). Further, recent studies published by the Arab World English Journal in two special issues examined challenges, advantages, and disadvantages of online EFL instruction using Moodle (Benadla & Hadji, 2021); benefits and challenges of online English writing instruction (Sheerah et al., 2022); and challenges and opportunities of online English writing assessment (Al-bargi, 2022). Nonetheless, a few studies have been done concerning English writing instruction, particularly examining the perceived acceptance of technology use in the Indonesian EFL writing classroom during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Studies on Google Docs in L2 Context**

The widely used technology for writing is the Web 2.0 technologies (Otto, 2017), and one of such technologies is Google Docs (GD), which has gained its popularity for promoting
collaborative writing (Godwin-Jones, 2008; Yim & Warschauer, 2017; Storch, 2013) in that it affords the students opportunities to jointly author and edit texts, and give feedback simultaneously. Although many studies on the use of GD focus on the efficacy of CW using the technology, some studies have documented its contribution to L2 writing skills development. Abrams (2019) examined the effect of CW using GD and unveiled that the students engaged in the joint composition outperformed their counterparts in a less collaborative writing group in terms of coherence. The study also encapsulated that the use of GD assisted the students and instructors in creating a group and used various features. It also showed that the function history depicted the students' understanding of the task and indicated their difficulties in lexico-grammatical choices and pragmatics. GD was found to be effective in storing and organizing data. It also allowed the teachers to figure out the students who highly contribute to the text's authorship. The challenges of using GD included the difficulty to count the number of words used by the students and its inability to compile the individual student's works. Another study by Li (2019) who drew on the concept of Desire2Learn and GD for teaching French, unveiled that both technologies could yield an inclusive and collaborative learning environment, promote active or engaging learning environment. GD, in particular, enabled the teacher to record all the learning activities done outside classroom, and to give feedback and comment on the students' work. Likewise, Zioga and Bikos (2020) investigated the effect of using GD for collaborative writing on producing argumentative writing in the Greek language classroom. The study discovered that there was a significant increase in the students' argumentative writing discourse given significant value "(t(20)=5.83, p<.001) between the pre- (M=31.67, SD=8.75) and the post-test (M=45.81, SD=14.65)" (p. 138). The study highlighted that Google Docs was influential in promoting the argumentative writing discourse of the students. Another study by Woodrich and Fan (2017) looked into how GD could promote the students with different linguistic backgrounds to participate in learning English in a blended learning environment. It was discovered that the students benefitted from the incorporation of GD on English language skills development. The anonymity that GD afforded could promote the students’ participation and enjoyment. Alharbi (2020) carried out a qualitative case study and explored how incorporating GD facilitated and promoted writing practices in English. It was found that it afforded the teacher-students and peer feedback, peer drafting and editing, and responses towards the feedback and revision. The study also uncovered that the students overall positively perceived the employment of GD in the English writing classroom. Nguyen (2020) discovered that most of the students and teachers at a Vietnamese university preferred to use GD as a means of collaborative writing.

Based on the studies above, it can be concluded that GD has been widely adopted as a means of CW. Secondly, incorporating the Web-2.0 technology in such a collaborative learning environment benefitted the students in many ways, including its affordances for mediating teacher and peer feedback, drafting, revising, and promoting their writing skills. However, although studies have adequately documented the efficacy of GD in the L2 writing context, little evidence has been generated on how the technology used to facilitate writing practices amid the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the Indonesian EFL context. More specifically, studies documenting the perceived acceptance of GD as a medium of collaborative instruction, the possible challenges it may bring about, and its refined enactment in the online English writing classroom during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Indonesian EFL context remain sparse. For these reasons, this study aimed to examine such a pedagogical issue.
Method

Research Design

This study drew on a mixed Action Research (AR) method that respectively garnered both the quantitative and qualitative data through a close-ended questionnaire, and phone-interview and open-ended questionnaire. The use of the research method was to help improve the pedagogical situation hampering the students’ learning (Burns, 2010). In this learning context, the enactment of GD was aimed to facilitate the students’ collaborative writing practices in the age of the Covid-19 pandemic or New Normal.

This study took place at the English Education Program of Mataram State Islamic University, Indonesia, during which online instruction was compulsory to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus. It involved 106 fifth-semester students from four English Essay classes whose English level ranged between pre-elementary and elementary levels. The course was taught for 100 minutes a week. The students were required to collaboratively author three different genres of Essay writing in English: Descriptive, Narrative, and Expository Essays throughout the semester.

Data Collection and Analysis

To answer research question No. 1 (RQ1) regarding the students’ perceptions of the enactment of Google Docs for collaborative English writing during the Covid-19 pandemic, the 7-Likert scale questionnaire, “Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and e-Learning”, indicating “Strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree”, adapted from Masrom (2007) was distributed via Google Form to the students. The questionnaire consisted of four constructs “perceived ease of use (PEU), perceived usefulness (PU), attitude toward using (ATU), and intention to use (ITU)”. The first three constructs comprised four items, while the “INT” consisted of three items. The adaption included fitting the item to the context of the study. For example, the original statement “I found E-learning easy to use” (Item 1 for the construct “Perceive ease of use”) was slightly modified into “I found Google Docs easy to use for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic” (See appendix for details). The reasons for adapting the questionnaire were mainly because of its high reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha value α=0.8) (see Masrom, 2007, p. 5), which indicated that it had a high internal consistency of items (Field, 2009). Secondly, the TAM questionnaire had been widely adapted to measure the students’ acceptance of technology use (e.g., Chen Hsieh et al., 2017; Tsai, 2015). All the items were translated into the Indonesian language to avoid misunderstanding. To analyze the results, this study drew on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as coined by Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019) using SMARTPLS3 software developed by Ringle, Wende, and Becker (2015) because it enabled the researchers to elucidate the complex model of a multitude of constructs, variables as well as the causal relationships (Hair et al., 2019). This data analysis technique comprises two prominently used procedures, assessment of measurement model and structural model. The former refers to examining the reliability and validity of the constructs, while the latter assessed the hypothetical relationships developed in this study.

To elicit the qualitative data regarding the RQ2 and RQ3, an open-ended questionnaire was distributed to the students via Google Form at the end of the course. A follow-up semi-structured interview via a smartphone involving twelve purposively selected students was carried out to
corroborate the qualitative findings. It drew on the phone-interview procedures for qualitative data collection technique coined by Burke and Miller (2001) that comprised pre-, during, and post-interview stages because of the physical restriction. The students were purposively selected according to their level of participation and willingness and recorded via a smartphone. The two qualitative data collection procedures were applied in the Indonesian language to allow the participants to express themselves without communication barriers or misunderstandings. The qualitative data garnered from both the open-ended questionnaire were analyzed using Voyant, a free web-based text analysis tool, which can be accessed via https://voyant-tools.org/. To analyze the data elicited from the phone-interview, Braun and Clarke's (2016) thematic data analysis procedures were used, which include data understanding, coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, naming and reporting. To validate the findings, two translation experts were invited to review the translation outcomes. Also, the findings were confirmed to the participants to avoid misinterpretation via a phone call.

Findings and Discussion

**R1: Students' reaction towards the enactment of Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Perceived Usefulness (PU), Attitude towards Using (ATU), Intention to Use (ITU).**

The statistical outcome shows that the assessment of the measurement model indicates high reliability and validity given the factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha value, and Composite Reliability (CR) above the standard recommended value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Nunnally (1978) and (Field, 2009) suggested that the overall Cronbach's Alpha value (α=0.80) was considered satisfactory. It echoes the model coined by Masrom (2007), which also generated the same value α=0.80 (see table 2). In addition, the statistical analysis also yielded a satisfactory level of validity as evidenced by the value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.50, which indicates a minimum half of the construct describes the item variance (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>rho_A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Ease of Use</td>
<td>PEU1</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td>0.884</td>
<td>0.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PEU2</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PEU3</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PEU4</td>
<td>0.751</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Usefulness</td>
<td>PU1</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.854</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.901</td>
<td>0.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PU2</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PU3</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PU4</td>
<td>0.832</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards Use</td>
<td>ATU1</td>
<td>0.847</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td>0.903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ATU2</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ATU3</td>
<td>0.908</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ATU4</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to Use</td>
<td>ITU1</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ITU2</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ITU3</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the students’ reaction toward the use of GD for collaborative writing practices during the Covid-19 pandemic, the statistical evidence indicates that overall, they accepted the use of the Web 2.0 technology. This is evidenced by the descriptive statistics that
yielded the average mean value ($M=6.0$), specifically with PEU ($M=5.95$, $SD=.87$), PU ($M=6.0$, $SD=.88$), ATU ($M=6.10$, $SD=.86$), and ITU ($M=5.66$, $SD=1.01$) signifying their overall acceptance (see Table 3 for details). Davis (1989) advocated that the higher the PU and PEU of the technology, the more likely its application is accepted by its users, which eventually leads to their attitude, intention, and actual use of the technology. This encapsulates that GD could facilitate collaborative writing practices during this new normal learning condition.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Ease of Use</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Usefulness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards Use</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to Use</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$N: 106$

In terms of the structural model, the figure 3 below illustrates the $R^2$ value of the hypothetical relationships between the latent variables measured. The effect that the respective independent variables on the dependent variable were significant given the respective all $R^2$ values of over 0.60, indicating substantial effect (Hair et al., 2019). In detail, the PEU influenced 70.5% PU perceived by the students, while both of the variables affected 63.8% of the ATU, and PU and ATU contributed 73.1% to the ITU the GD for collaborative writing practices during the Covid-19 pandemic as perceived by the students (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Measurement model

Further hypothetical relationship analysis, as depicted in Table 4, showed a significant relationship between all variables in that all the null hypotheses ($H_0$) were rejected. The results of $H_1$ and $H_2$ tests revealed that PEU significantly affected the PU and ATU, respectively, given statistical evidence ($\beta=.840$, $t=28.174$, $p<.001$) and ($\beta=.269$, $t=1.824$, $p<.034$). The other statistical relationships ($H_3$ and $H_4$) unveiled that PU had a significant effect respectively on the ATU and ITU ($\beta=.559$, $t=4.369$, $p<.000$) and ($\beta=.317$, $t=3.543$, $p<.000$). The $H_5$ that measured the effect of ATU on the ITU unveiled that the former significantly affected the latter ($\beta=.583$, $t=6.734$, $p<.000$).

Table 4. Hypothetical Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H_1$ Perceived Ease of Use $\rightarrow$ Perceived Usefulness</td>
<td>0.840</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>28.174</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_2$ Perceived Ease of Use $\rightarrow$ Attitude towards Use</td>
<td>0.269</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>1.824</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Acceptance of Enacting Google Docs in an Online Syarifudin & Husnawadi

| H3 | Perceived Usefulness | Attitude towards Use | 0.559 | 0.128 | 4.369 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| H4 | Perceived Usefulness | Intention to Use | 0.317 | 0.089 | 3.543 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| H5 | Attitude towards Use | Intention to Use | 0.583 | 0.087 | 6.734 | 0.000 | Accepted |

These statistical relationships accord with the results of some previous studies on TAM in the ELT landscape. For example, Huang and Teo (2021) discovered that all the measured TAM variables were positively attributed to ITU. Similarly, Kampookaew (2020) qualitatively evidenced that the measured variables of TAM significantly contributed to the ITU technologies of Thai EFL teachers in their classrooms. Mei et al. (2017) unveiled that PEU and PU had a significant effect on the ITU CALL 2.0 technologies. However, other previous studies showed contradictory findings related to the specific variables being measured in this study. Hsieh et al. (2017) discovered that PEU did not positively affect PU in the use of LINE apps for Flipped English instruction, although another published study unveiled that their use of LINE was overall accepted (see Hsieh et al., 2017). Likewise, Masrom (2007) unveiled that ATU did not have a significant effect on the ITU. The author reasoned that the technologies and their users highly determined it. For example, the current study employed GD as a medium of collaborative writing instruction, while previous studies adopted LINE and other respective technologies. It signifies that different (uses)technologies for specific pedagogical purposes affect the causational relationships in the TAM; hence, affecting their overall level of technology acceptance.

The overall acceptance of GD in this study can be attributed to its feasibility for collaborative English writing instruction in the era of the new normal. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the shift of FTF to complete online instruction to date. The nature of collaborative writing using GD in this study contributed to the overall acceptance perceived by the students because the Web-2.0 technology-mediated the writing students in the collaborative authorship of texts beyond the schooling wall regardless of time and space (Yim & Warschauer, 2017). Furthermore, the notion of CW in the online instruction amid the Covid-19 pandemic maximized the students’ interaction, reduced their work overload, and promoted their collaborative performance as a team. Similarly, Azis & Husnawadi (2020) discovered that online CW could promote students' inter-relationships and belonging.

With regard to the use of GD for L2 writing instruction, Abrams (2019) found that students who collaboratively used GD outperformed their counterparts solitarily using the same technology. It enabled the writing instructor and students to use various features and create group work. In addition, Zioga and Bikos (2020) and Woodrich and Fan (2017) found that GD's use developed the students’ writing skills and English skills development. Similarly, Li (2019) unveiled that GD could promote inclusive and collaborative writing and learning engagement. Alharbi (2020) unveiled that the students positively accepted the employment of GD for writing instruction as it allowed them to provide authors the text and give feedback collaboratively.

Based on the statistical evidence that showed the students’ overall technology acceptance and the hypothetical relationships that indicate the PEU and PU significant influence on the students’ attitude and intention to use the GD for collaborative writing practices amid the Covid-
19 pandemic, this current study encapsulates that the use of the web 2.0 technology was overall useful and easy for the writing students.

**RQ2. Challenges Encountered by the Writing Students Regarding the Use of Google Docs**

Although the majority of the students experienced no barriers to using GD to write their essays collaboratively, some of them stated that the primary problem pertained to the inadequacy of internet connection and quota as visually depicted in figure 4.

![Visual Link](https://bit.ly/3AMWejh)

The following excerpts also illustrate the writing students’ responses regarding their challenges for using GD for such pedagogical purposes extracted from the open-ended questionnaire and phone interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet Connection</td>
<td>“I find it challenging when I run out of internet balance or quota....” [open ended questionnaire: Student 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I personally feel that the internet signal and quota are the two main problems as I cannot continue my writing when trying to finish it” [open ended questionnaire: Student 4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Sometimes, the internet connection does not support this kind of learning using Google Docs because I live an a remote area in Lombok” [open ended questionnaire: Student 6]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“For me so far, there is no problem, but I think the internet connection is the primary barrier” [open ended questionnaire: Student 19]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Sometimes, it is difficult to get into Google Docs because of low internet connection” [open ended questionnaire: Student 26]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think the problem I encountered during the writing practices was the instability of the internet connection....” [Phone interview Students 2]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The qualitative evidence above unveiled that there had been one primary barrier of using GD for collaborative writing, namely the lack of internet connection and the absence of email entry notification. The former is a prominent issue related to online instruction, particularly in developing countries, such as Indonesia. A study by Ebadi and Rahimi (2019), for example, discovered that internet connection remained the only challenge that the students at an Iranian university encountered. Likewise, Hafour and Al-Rashidy (2020) uncovered that the students found the low internet connection as their barrier during the synchronous collaborative writing via GD. In the Indonesian EFL context, Mardiah (2020) unveiled that the lack of access to the internet and technologies were among the learning barriers during the learning online learning amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, some of the students in the current study live in remote areas where the access to the internet remains sparse.

For this reason, it is incumbent upon the Indonesian government to provide broader access to the internet to successfully implement online instruction, including providing technological and pedagogical training for EFL teachers (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). The disparity between the students who had sufficient access to the technologies and their counterparts with the technological inadequacy in this study also confirmed the worse state of the digital divide caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Shin, 2020). Nonetheless, this study provides empirical evidence of the overall acceptance of using GD to facilitate the writing students’ joint authorship of the text during the hard time. This learning barrier can be minimized by allowing the students to work on their writing tasks in a more flexible manner, say one week to jointly write essays with their group members.

**RQ3. Pedagogical Refinement of Using Google Docs as Suggested by the students**

Although the majority of the students thought that they were satisfied with the use of GD for collaborative writing practices during the pandemic due to its ease, efficiency, and effectiveness, some of them suggested that its enactment in the classroom could be refined by providing more practical training to help them better operate the web 2.0 technology as visually illustrated in following Figure 5.

**Note: Translated terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saran</td>
<td>Suggested refinement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fitur</td>
<td>Feature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following sample excerpts also illustrate the students’ advice for the refinement of the GD use. Despite this, the students admitted that GD’s enactment had been efficient, helpful, and effective for them to practice their writing amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Training on Google Docs</td>
<td>“I would suggest that before using Google Docs, the lecturer should give practical examples of exercises on how to use the technology in details to avoid the misunderstanding” [open ended questionnaire: Student 99]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To apply Google Docs, the lecturer should introduce the all its features to the students to help them better understand on how to operate it” [open ended questionnaire: Student 58]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“At the beginning, I thought using Google Docs was confusing even though you introduced us on how to use it by sharing the YouTube video on our Whatsapp group. If I can advise, please give more practical training, more details on how to deploy it….” [Phone interview Students 4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think generally using Google Docs is facilitative, but please provide more examples on how to operate it at the outset…..” [Phone interview Students 12]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This qualitative evidence corroborates the statistical results related to the PEU and PU significant levels and effects on the students’ attitude and intention to use the Web 2.0 technology for collaborative writing practices in the time of new normal. It also echoes that of previous studies on GD for collaborative writing in that it could foster the students’ attitude toward learning (Lin et al., 2016); learning enjoyment (Woodrich & Fan, 2017). Ebadi and Rahimi (2019) unveiled that the students in their study positively perceived the use of GD for collaborative writing due to its usefulness and ease of use because it provided them with editing and user-friendly features respectively that resemble other prominent words processors programs. Future use of GD for collaborative writing requires further training for the students who are new to this technology.

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to unveil the students’ perceptions on the enactment of GD for collaborative writing practices amid the Covid-19 pandemic at the English Education Program of Mataram State Islamic University. Grounded in the TAM theory coined by Davis (1989), it was unveiled that the students positively perceived the use of the Web 2.0 technology given the overall acceptance level ($M=6.0$). It also yielded that the PEU and PU and ATU significantly affected the students’ ITU the technology for collaborative writing practices in the age of new normal. These positive causational relationships signify that GD was user-friendly and useful for the students to jointly execute their writing tasks, leading to their intention to use the Web 2.0 technology. The qualitative evidence showed that the writing students found the unstable internet connection and email notification...
regarding their writing tasks as the primary challenges. In addition, the only suggested refinement was further training on the use of GD for them to better operate the technology for writing practices. Drawing on these findings, it is suggested that future use of GD for collaborative writing in an online learning environment should provide more practical examples of its use for the students. Also, related stakeholders, such as universities, schools, and governments, should provide better technological infrastructure to deal with the learning barriers, and low internet access. In addition, one-week collaborative writing tasks should be enacted asynchronously rather than at one time synchronously. This way allows the writing students to technically prepare themselves at the outset by seeking for adequate or stable internet connection.

Recommendations

Further studies are needed to examine the efficacy of GD on the students’ writing skills during the covid-19 pandemic. For instance, future studies may adopt a pure experimental design to investigate the impact of using GD on the students’ writing skills compared to using other Web 2.0 technologies. In addition, future research can also explore more in-depth phenomena through a narrative inquiry study that explores the students’ experiences about the use of GD for writing in the age of new normal. As this study is based on Likert-scale perceptions, future studies may document the students' technology acceptance level qualitatively, such as through a case study design. Examining students’ acceptance and its impacts on other dependent variables, such as learning engagement, motivation, learning outcomes, and etc., in the context of ELT would be worthy of investigation. Nonetheless, the current study provides solid empirical evidence on the enactment of GD as a means of collaborative writing in the age of the Covid-19 pandemic seen from TAM theory. It sheds light on the feasibility of GD for such a pedagogical purpose, which can be a reference for English writing teachers.

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References


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Perceived Acceptance of Enacting Google Docs in an Online Syarifudin & Husnawadi


This survey adapted from Masrom (2007) is to understand your overall perception of enacting Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic. There is no right or wrong answer. Please circle the answer which best reflects your overall thoughts about each statement. Your answers are anonymous and confidential. Thank you in advance for your time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>Very Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I found Google Docs easy to use for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Learning to use Google Docs would be easy for me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>My interaction with Google Docs was clear and understandable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>It would be easy for me to find information at Google Docs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Using Google Docs would enhance my effectiveness in collaborative writing during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Using Google Docs would improve my writing performance in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Using Google Docs would increase my productivity in my English class during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I found Google Docs useful for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I like the idea of using Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I have a generally favorable attitude toward using Google Docs collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I believe it is (would be) a good idea to use this Google Docs for my writing class during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Using Google Docs collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic is a good idea.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I intend to use Google Docs collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I will often return to Google Docs for collaborative writing in English during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I intend to visit Google Docs frequently for my writing class during the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAMPLE WRITING TASKS FROM GOOGLE DOCS

Dear beloved students,

Welcome to our online collaborative writing class. Please read all things set below. It is important that we are no longer able to carry out the back-to-face class due to the lockdown of the campus. It is, however, for the sake of our wellbeing. After all, health is more important than anything else. Therefore, it is better to stay at home by using any means of learning that is available to us right now, such as Google Docs (Synchronous) and Schoology (asynchronous). I hope this collaborative online writing practice may help facilitate our learning to write a descriptive essay in English during this COVID-19 outbreak. Stay and learn at home while having a cup of tea or coffee.

Objectives: By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:
1. Outline ideas for a descriptive essay about a tourism site in English
2. Provide constructive feedback regarding the outline and essay of a descriptive essay about a tourism site in English collaboratively
3. Write a descriptive essay about a tourism site in English collaboratively in a way that is meaningful and logically correct

Lecturer's roles:
1. Provides access to the Google Docs collaborative learning according to the classes and group numbers
2. Provides direct or indirect feedback during and after the writing of your essay
3. Ensures the collaborative writing class run smoothly
4. Respond to any queries from the students

GROUP A With your group members, write an expository essay and affect essay about the factors contributing to a successful English language learner. You should write a minimum of 350 words essay. You should answer the following essay question prompts: What are the possible factors contributing to becoming a successful English language learner? Provide evidence or facts to justify your claims. You are given 60 minutes to complete your essay.

MEMBERS
Affia Rahmawati
Alina Yullianti
Aima Widiyanti Aidanala

What It Takes To Be A Successful English Learner

Learning English is very important, especially for education and the future. Now English is even included in the curriculum at all levels of education. There are even schools that require their students to speak full English during teaching and learning activities at school. However, most students have difficulty in mastering English. Some factors that determine if an individual can be a successful English learner include familiarity with English and mental management.

To be able to learn English, students must familiarize themselves with English. First, they must often read books, articles, or literature in English. This can increase their knowledge, improve their reading ability, and increase their vocabulary. In addition, students must often listen and watch English movies and TV shows to become better speakers. It can help improve their pronunciation, and can also improve their listening skills. It can also be learned mainly by listening to English songs. For students who like music, of course learning this will be very fun. Another fun thing that students can do as a means of learning English is to watch English films. It is the most complex. This can help add their new vocabulary and idioms, improve their pronunciation, and improve their listening skills. Finally, students have to practice often. They can invite their friends or family to speak English. On the other hand, they can also try to chat in English. Practice makes perfect.

The other factor that contributes to being a successful English learner is mental management. Students must have strong motivation in learning English. Motivation has an important role in the learning process. Students who have motivation will be more motivated to carry out learning activities. They will be more enthusiastic in learning, which certainly has a good impact on mastering English. In addition, self-confidence also greatly affects the success of mastering English. Students who have self-confidence have greater courage to practice their English. It certainly helps them in mastering English. A study shows that the effect of motivation and self-confidence on student learning achievement is 27.5%. This also applies to learning English. Therefore, to become a successful English learner, students must raise their motivation and self-confidence.

In conclusion, the success of English learners is influenced by two factors, namely the familiarity with English and mental management. Students who want to be a successful English learner must familiarize themselves with English by reading books in English, listening to native speakers or English songs, watching English movies, and practicing speaking English. In addition, they also must manage their mentality to raise motivation and self-confidence.
Difficulties in Academic Writing in English as a Second/Foreign Language from the Perspective of Undergraduate Students in Higher Education Institutions in Oman

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Abstract:
The English language is the medium of instruction in Omani Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and mastering writing in English has become a requirement for success. This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by the learners at the tertiary level when writing English from learners' perspective and to determine what teaching approach students consider the most effective. A survey was conducted for the purpose of focusing on two main domains, the difficulties faced by them from their perspective, and the strategies they deem helpful. The results show that students’ main challenges are the limited vocabulary and range of grammatical structures, inability to comprehend reading texts, and difficulties in summarizing and paraphrasing. Findings also show that the most helpful strategies, from students’ point of view, are feedback from the teacher, both specific and general, extensive reading about the topic, using a dictionary, examining writing models, and writing multiple drafts.

Keywords: Academic writing, difficulties, foreign/second language, Omani higher education, helpful strategies, undergraduate students

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Introduction

Though English is a compulsory subject at schools in Oman, mastering writing skills in English poses a challenge to students in higher education. English is the medium of instruction, and the ability to write in EFL/ESL is a significant factor in language acquisition and learning. Verbal and written assessments require a specific proficiency in English; therefore, students’ success in higher education depends on their English language proficiency. More specifically, their success at the tertiary level depends on their ability to “access, evaluate, synthesize the words, ideas and opinions of others in order to develop their own academic voice” (Al Fedda, 2012, p.124). It is argued that writing is not a natural activity; it is a cognitive activity characterized by complexity in which the writer must demonstrate control over multiple variables simultaneously (Nunan 1989). Variables include thinking, relevant knowledge, ideas, and vocabulary (Anwar & Ahmed, 2016). Writing components identified by Ampa and Quraisy (2018) are structure, vocabulary, content, organization, and mechanics. In addition to the myriad of variables involved, students must observe the writing conventions of the second language. Thus, students need to overcome the complexity to compose correctly. In addition to the linguistic skills involved, the writing process includes steps that students should follow towards the final production of the writing piece, such as generating ideas, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing (Khattar, 2019).

From the teaching perspective, it is not easy to decide on a single strategy to teach writing in English to facilitate learning. Collaborative learning, either in groups or in pairs, has been advocated as an influential factor in facilitating the learning of writing and improving students’ final product (Donato, 1994, Al-Tai, 2015, Khatib & Meihami, 2015; McDonough et al., 2019, Aldossary 2021; Stroch 2005 and Abbas & Al-Bakri, 2018). Another approach is integrating reading and writing, where proponents argue that extensive reading leads to better writing (Alqouran & Smadi, 2016, Abu Ayyash & Khalaf, 2016 and Mudawy & Mousa, 2017). Researchers in the field stress the role of providing feedback as constructive, and corrective feedback is believed to be an instrumental factor in learning academic writing (Al-Marwani, 2020, Hasan & Karim, 2019 and Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005).

Literature Review

Challenges Associated with Academic Writing in English as a Foreign/Second language

Academic writing differs from other genres. Al-Mansour (2015) describes it as “a host of references, information, and evidence to support it” (p.95). Academic writing is scholarly in its purport, presentation, and its penchant for reasoning and logic (Al-Mansour, 2015). Hayland (2002) stresses the reliance on style, content, and the tangible information and details that protect the formal style that qualifies writing to be academic and thus presented to its specific audience, scholars, and teachers. Therefore, competency in academic writing necessitates cognitive skills in understanding, application, and synthesis of knowledge (Defazio et al. 2010). Characteristics of academic writing also include well-planned paragraphs, perfectly connected ideas, elaborate structures, and a vast range of vocabulary (Hayland, 2002). The ingredients of punctuation and the observation of grammar conventions are highlighted by Sawles (2005) as tools for clarity of content and thought that leave no room for ambiguity.

Considering the salient features of academic writing, producing an accurate, clear, fluent, and organized written text is challenging, leading to one of the most common problems EFL/ESL
learners face: weak written performance. To write academically, students must have the ability to handle words critically as well as the ideas of others to develop their voice, which proves to be a challenging task even for English-speaking students (Mudawy & Mousa, 2017). Tardy (2010) propounded that the challenge students face is multifaceted because they must choose information, evaluate, summarise, report, paraphrase, argue, select grammatical patterns and words, and avoid plagiarism. Al Marwani (2020) identified three categories of challenges encountered by students, which are “language skills, academic writing skills, and source managing skills” (p.114).

Research in the field constantly reveals that the range of challenges pertinent to academic writing encountered by EFL/ESL learners is broad and encompasses most language aspects. The most frequent challenges reported are vocabulary deficiency, First language (L1) interference and confusion in grammatical rules, difficulties in reading, interference in L1 syntax, spelling, punctuation, verb form, word order, spoken expressions, contracted forms, cohesion, and repetition of ideas (Farooq, Uzair-Ul-Hassan & Wahid 2012 and Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016). L1 interference stems from the tendency of learners to compose sentences in their language and then translate them into the target language (Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016). Mudawy & Mousa (2017) highlighted the complicated punctuation rules in English, vocabulary, and grammatical structures. The focus of Atashian & Al-Bahri (2018) was grammar, and their study that included 200 Omani undergraduate students showed that the most frequent grammar mistakes made by students were in tenses, pronouns, and adverbs. In addition, research suggests that difficulties in academic writing are even persistent with learners living in an English-speaking community. The results of a study in the United States graduate students who speak different first languages: Greek, Japanese, Korean, and Ukrainian, indicated that linguistic difficulty in writing research papers was the most common problem. The lack of proficiency in academic writing in English was a problem for the students, although they had studied and lived in the United States for five years on average at the time of the study (Cho, 2004). Challenges in academic writing are also common among postgraduate students. A survey of postgraduate international students in Australia (Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Omani) revealed that difficulties faced by them were coherence, cohesion, important topics, and relevant references, expressing their voice, paraphrasing, referencing, and citations (Al Badi, 2015).

Challenges Specific to Arab Learners

Arab learners are no exception to the challenges associated with writing in English as a second/foreign language. However, other challenges related to the nature of Arabic as a language add to the perplexity of the writing task. Studies have revealed that writing in English is a complex process for Arab learners (Shukri, 2014) and mastering academic writing in English is a substantial challenge for Arab learners (Mallia, 2015). The difficulties associated with learning a second language add to the complexity of mastering the writing skill (Kroll 1990 as cited in Shukri 2014). Kroll (1990, as cited in Shukri 2014) opines that Arab learners’ writing in English is influenced by Arabic orthography. This was reiterated by the study of Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal (2021), whose results showed that teachers perceived “orthographical differences with the mother tongue as an impediment in the learner’s ability to write well in English” (p.399). Al-Khatib (2017) identified several spelling errors occurring in Arab learners’ writing, the top of which are dealing with vowels that have different sounds, silent letters, and different letters that have one sound. Shukri (2014) identifies two main challenges related to Arab learners and associated with the particularity of the

Difficulties in Academic Writing in English as a Second/Foreign Mustafa, Arbab & El Sayed

Arabic language, which are the inability of Arab learners to think of different rhetorical approaches, and the diglossia in the Arab speech community, namely the two forms of classical and colloquial. Investigating rhetorical organization as shown in the use of cohesive devices, Phillips (2017, as cited in Al-Khatib 2017) concluded that cohesion differs between the two languages because of the cultural contrast between the two speaking communities. English cohesion is specified, non-additive, change-oriented, and text-based, while Arabic cohesion is generalized, additive, repetition-oriented, and context-based. Concerning grammar, the most frequent error that accounted for 25% of errors in the sample investigated by Al-Khatib (2017) was errors in verb tense, followed by inappropriate addition or omission of articles by 20%. The study also revealed that spelling errors are attributed to the nature of English as a semi-phonetic language. Mistakes made by students reflected their inability to deal with vowels that have different sounds, silent letters, and different letters that have one sound.

Lengthier sentences characterize the differences between the two alphabets. The Arabic writing style and metaphoric phrases are also difficulties encountered by Arab learners (Al-Fadda, 2012).

Teaching strategies
Studies have also indicated that teaching approaches influence students’ writing learning (Anwar & Ahmed, 2016). Collaborative learning has been examined in several studies. Donato (1994) argues that writing in groups provides collective scaffolding where learners pool their resources and construct knowledge collectively. Group work was found to yield better results and higher achievement in fluency and task response as compared to individual writing or pair work among Omani female students by Al-Tai (2015). Khatib and Meihami (2015) showed that “collaborative writing has a significant positive effect on improving writing skill of the EFL students” (p.209). They also concluded that students who wrote collaboratively in small groups demonstrated improvement in organization, content, and grammar. McDonough et al. (2019) believed that students could produce more accurate writing, while Zenouzagh concluded that the syntactic complexity of students improved due to group work. Aldossary’s findings (2021) showed that students who were engaged in collaborative writing outperformed others. He attributes that to the active interaction of learners during the sessions. His study also showed that students perceived collaborative learning very positively. The survey of Stroch (2005) displayed that texts written by students in pairs were more grammatically accurate with better language complexity and task achievement. Abbas and Al-Bakri (2018) have found that the pair writing technique has a positive effect on the quality and quantity of students’ writing in addition to its impact on lowering students’ writing anxiety as pair work creates a safe learning environment, enhances their critical thinking skills, and provides them with the opportunity to read and listen critically and then give feedback.

An instructional program in which integrated reading and writing yielded positive results on the students’ overall writing performance and the subskills of organization, focus, and development in the study of Alqouran & Smadi (2016). Through reading, students are exposed to orthography, morphosyntactic features, cohesive devices, words, text structure, and typographical features such as paragraphing, punctuation, and capitalization. The researchers have also concluded that the integration between reading and writing has a positive effect on the students’
attitude toward writing and reading comprehension. This reciprocal effect of reading and writing is also advocated by Abu Ayyash and Khalaf (2016). They agree that improvement in one of the two skills leads to improvement in the other. Mudawy and Mousa (2017) recommended extensive reading as a tool to enhance students’ writing, and so did Abu Ayyash and Khalaf (2016) upon observing noteworthy improvement in the writing of the experimental group in their study.

One crucial source of support is the constructive, scaffolded feedback by lecturers, as stated by Al Marwani (2020), whose study showed that technology (Google classroom in his case) could enhance students’ academic writing. Nonetheless, the intervention by lecturers and their feedback is indispensable. The importance of feedback in learning writing is also stressed by Hasan and Karim (2019, p. 291), who maintain that feedback enables learners to “observe and anchor their errors and become aware of how to progress their writing.” A distinction was made between verbal and written feedback as the results of Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) show that verbal feedback in combination with written feedback had a more significant effect than written feedback alone on improved accuracy over time.

Writing cannot be isolated from reading. Baker (1974, as cited in Maloney 2003) found that 85% of learning in college results from independent reading. However, it has been argued that cultivating reading habits is even more difficult in this era, where the reading culture has almost disappeared due to television, videos, movies, and games (Chokwe, 2013).

Objectives of the study:
1. From the perspective of students, to identify the difficulties encountered by undergraduate students in higher education institutions in Oman.
2. From the students’ perspective, to determine which teaching approaches facilitate achieving proficiency in academic writing.

Research methods:
The data collection method was a questionnaire distributed to a sample of students of both genders in several higher education institutions in Oman. This was done in coordination with English language teachers in the concerned institutions. The number of responses obtained was 97 responses across all the institutions. The questionnaire targeted two main areas, the difficulties that students face in academic writing in English and the strategies they believe to be helpful in their learning process. The challenges investigated fall under the following skills: vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, organization, cohesion, coherence, summarizing, paraphrasing, and referencing. Helpful strategies investigated are specific feedback by the teacher, using a dictionary, extensive reading about the topic, examining good examples of essays written by others, general feedback by the teacher, writing an outline/plan for the essay, writing multiple drafts, working with a peer, and working in groups.

Results
The questionnaire focusses on two areas, the difficulties encountered by the students from their perspective and the strategies they deem effective in learning English academic writing. The first domain is further specified to cover the following skills: vocabulary, grammar and sentence
structure, spelling, punctuation, organization, cohesion, coherence, summarizing, paraphrasing, and referencing.

**General Difficulties**

In the first part, students were required to rate the skills according to the difficulty level, Table 1. Results show that students rated paraphrasing as the most difficult with 34%, followed by summarising with 30.9%. The least difficult was punctuation, as only 12.35% of students thought it very difficult or difficult.

Table 1. Difficulties students face in skills (general)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Very Difficult &amp; Difficult (Percentage of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarising</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and sentence structure</td>
<td>25.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization, cohesion, and coherence</td>
<td>24.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Specific Difficulties**

The general skills are further detailed in more specific areas in the second part of the survey to explore the limitations of students in each area and the challenges they face. In vocabulary, results demonstrate that students’ vocabulary is limited and simple, and they do not possess enough vocabulary items. Only 40% expressed their ability to use new words, while half of them resorted to repetition of words they already know. In the area of spelling, results show that spelling simple words or words known to students is not an issue, while it is challenging for them to spell new or more extended words, 51.5% each. Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree&amp; Agree (Percentage of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use simple words in my writing</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have limited vocabulary</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing is difficult for me because I do not have enough vocabulary</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use different words to express the same meaning in English</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I repeat the same words when I write</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using proper vocabulary (vocabulary that is related to the topic) is</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficult for me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use new words when I write</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree&amp; Agree (Percentage of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can spell simple words</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can spell words that I already know correctly</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to write the correct spelling of new words</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spelling longer words is difficult for me 51.5%
Having silent letters in some English words make spelling difficult for me 44.3%

In grammar and sentence structure, roughly two-thirds of students use simple sentences most of the time. The percentage of all other responses in this area was below 50%, the highest being 47.4% for using the correct verb tense, followed by 40.2% for using the passive voice. The lowest response, 28.8%, was for writing sentences without verbs. As for organization, cohesion, and coherence, this area does not seem to be challenging as all the responses were under 50%. However, results show that providing supporting sentences (47.4%) and establishing a connection between the paragraphs in an essay (45.3%) are the most challenging, while writing the introduction and conclusion are the least difficult, 36.08% and 32.9%, respectively. As for punctuation, figures generally show that it is not an area of concern, with the highest response being 37.1% representing students who are in the habit of writing long sentences without punctuation. 35.05% of students tend to start sentences without a capital letter.

Table 4. Grammar and sentence structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree&amp; Agree (Percentage of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I tend to use simple sentences most of the time</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to use the correct verb tense</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to use the passive voice</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to use the correct word order in a sentence</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles (a, an &amp; the) are confusing</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns confuse me</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using prepositions is confusing</td>
<td>35.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes write sentences without verbs</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Organization, cohesion, and coherence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree&amp; Agree (Percentage of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to provide supporting sentences in a paragraph</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to establish a connection between the paragraphs in an essay</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to connect ideas in the same paragraph</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to write a clear topic sentence</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to write an introduction to an essay</td>
<td>36.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to write a conclusion to an essay</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results for the three remaining areas, paraphrasing, summarizing, and referencing, also varied among students. 74.2% of students expressed their ability to paraphrase simple sentences. Though 71.1% believed reading the text more than once helps in understanding, it is still difficult for 38.1% of students to paraphrase the text and for 35.05% of them to summarise it even after understanding. In referencing, names of foreign authors confuse 42.2% of students, which can be attributed to cultural differences. In-text referencing is slightly more complicated than writing a list of references, 31.9%, and 29.8%, respectively.
Table 6. Paraphrasing & Summarising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree &amp; Agree (Percentage of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can paraphrase simple sentences</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the text when I read it more than once</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find long sentences difficult to understand</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to paraphrase paragraphs</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even after understanding the meaning, I cannot paraphrase the text correctly</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When paraphrasing, it is difficult for me to understand the original text</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot differentiate between the main idea and the supporting ideas when I read</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even after understanding the text, I find it difficult to summarise</td>
<td>35.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies

The second focus of the questionnaire was to investigate the strategies or approaches that students believe to be helpful in their learning of and performance in academic writing, Table 9. The strategies included in the questionnaire were specific feedback by the teacher (feedback only to me), extensive reading about the topic, using a dictionary, examining good examples of essays written by others, general feedback by the teacher, writing an outline/plan for the essay, writing multiple drafts, working with a peer (another student) and working in groups.

From the students’ perspective, the most helpful strategy is receiving specific (individual) feedback from the teacher, with a percentage of responses mounting to 90.7%. 82.4% of students also believe that general feedback given to class is helpful. High responses are also obtained for using dictionaries (89.6%). The high response for the usefulness of using dictionaries explains the low percentage the difficulty of spelling in general Table 1. The percentage of examining good examples of essays written by others is 88.6%. Similarly, reading extensively about the topic is helpful to 88.6% of students.

However, pair work and group work are considered the least useful from the students' point of view. Only 60.8% of them thought that working with a peer is helpful, and 59.7% thought that group work is beneficial. Though these results of areas of collaborative learning are still substantial, collaborative learning is the least helpful from the point of view of students compared to other strategies examined in the questionnaire.

Table 7. Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree &amp; Agree (Percentage of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific feedback by the teacher (feedback only to me)</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a dictionary</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive reading about the topic</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examining good examples of essays written by others</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General feedback by the teacher</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing an outline/plan for the essay</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing multiple drafts</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with a peer (another student)</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in groups</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Results show that undergraduate students in higher education institutions in Oman face difficulties in academic writing in English as a second/foreign language but in different degrees. Out of the eight general skills investigated in the survey, paraphrasing was rated by students as the most challenging. This is attributed to several factors, as revealed in the latter parts of the survey. These include their failure to comprehend texts and complex sentences, which in turn means the inability to handle the ideas of others, as maintained by Mudawy and Mousa (2017). Consequently, students find it challenging to evaluate and paraphrase information correctly (Tardy, 2010). Another contributing factor is students’ limited vocabulary and grammatical structures, which makes students resort to using and repeating the same vocabulary items, and grammatical structures, which adversely affects the final writing product. Students are also more comfortable with spelling familiar, simple words than new, longer ones. This adds to the limitations of vocabulary. Though Storch (2005) considered silent letters an issue leading to spelling mistakes, it is thought to be the least challenging by students responding to the questionnaire. Verb tenses are an issue for students in addition to the difficulty of using passive voice, which is an essential feature of academic writing. This might be traced to the differences between Arabic and English and interference of the first language.

Students deemed receiving specific (individual) feedback from the teacher and general feedback given to the class as the most helpful strategies. These high responses concur with Al-Marwani (2020), Hasan & Karim (2019), and Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005), who all stressed the importance of feedback in improving the students’ academic writing in the second/foreign language. This is connected to students’ high response concerning writing multiple drafts since the production of multiple drafts is usually based on receiving feedback from teachers. High responses are also obtained about the usefulness of using dictionaries which explains the low percentage the difficulty of spelling in general. Students also rated highly examining good examples of essays written by others and reading extensively about the topic. Such results confirm the effectiveness of reading to write as advocated by researchers in the field, Alqouran & Smadi (2016), Abu Ayyash and Khalaf (2016) and Mudawy & Mousa 2017. However, pair work and group work are considered the least helpful from the students’ point of view. Although collaborative learning is thought to be the least beneficial from the point of view of students compared to other strategies examined in the questionnaire, the percentages are still substantial, which does not negate the findings of Donato,1994, Al-Tai, 2015, Khatib & Meihami, 2015, McDonough et al. 2019, Aldossary 2021, Storch 2005 and Abbas & Al-Bakri, 2018

Conclusion

Academic writing in a foreign language requires mastering a myriad of language skills. Hence it is a challenging task for students in higher education institutions in Oman. Findings obtained using a survey and presented in this paper show that the main difficulties students in higher education in Oman face in Academic writing, from the students’ perspective, are attributed to limited vocabulary, reliance only on simple grammatical structures, incorrect spelling of new or long words, inability to understand reading texts and comprehend long, complex sentences and consequently the failure to paraphrase or summarise them. Findings also show that the most helpful strategies from their point of view (ordered top-down) are the teacher’s specific feedback delivered individually, using a dictionary, reading extensively about the topic, examining good examples of...
essays by others, general feedback by the teacher, writing outline and writing multiple drafts. Collaborative learning is the least helpful compared to others.

**Recommendations**

Examination of results shows that students in higher education in Oman face challenges in academic writing because of the limited and simple store of vocabulary and grammatical structures, in addition to difficulties in comprehending texts. Students highly rate the teacher feedback, the usefulness of using dictionaries, practice through writing drafts, and extensive reading before embarking on writing. Hence, teachers are recommended to adopt the approach of reading to write and to encourage students to read extensively to expose them to a broader range of vocabulary, structures, and styles. It is also highly recommended to provide individual feedback to students on their writing drafts, a task that demands time and effort from the teachers. Consequently, educational institutions are strongly recommended when planning their resources to consider the highly demanding nature of the tasks of writing teachers.

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An Investigation of Common Stress Placement Errors in English Word Roots and their Suffixed Derivatives by Arabic-Speaking EFL Learners

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Abstract
Suffixation influences lexical stress in one of three ways. A suffix attached to a word root/stem may take the stress itself, or it may cause it to move from where it was in the uninflected stem to another syllable, or it may keep stress as is. Stress misassignment is very common in the speech of Arabic-speaking English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. This study was conducted to investigate how Arabic-speaking EFL learners at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU) in Saudi Arabia assign lexical stress in word roots/stems and their suffixed derivatives to find out whether stress in suffixed words presented a greater challenge to the learners than stress in the stem; the study also aimed to examine whether errors in stress assignment were caused by first language (L1) interference. 112 students from PSAU were randomly chosen to pronounce 80 suffixed words as well as their roots/stems. The pronunciations were recorded, and the recordings were analyzed by the three researchers and three raters. The study concluded that suffixed words do not present a more significant stress assignment challenge than uninflected stems, the type of syllable attached to a word is not as important as the number of syllables, syllable weight and structure in a word, and that L1 influence may be one of the causes but not the only cause of lexical stress misassignment.

Keywords: Arabic-speaking English as a foreign language learner, English word roots, first language influence, stress placement, suffixed derivatives

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Introduction

Learners of a foreign language typically encounter a whole host of hurdles and detriments in their attempt to acquire the unfamiliar idiosyncrasies of the exotic language that they are grappling with (Han 2004; Robinson and Ellis 2008). Although learning a foreign language may sometimes be an easy and leisurely experience for some learners, for most learners the challenges are multifarious and at times dauntingly foreboding. Whatever the challenges that a learner is facing in their endeavor to acquire an acceptable level of understanding of the foreign language, it is nearly certain that their L1 will play a role, sometimes positive, sometimes negative, in the process. L1 influence can be positive when the structure is identical or similar for both languages, and it can be deleterious and even daunting when the languages are dissimilar, but more often than not L1 influence is viewed as more negative than positive (Yu & Chen, 2021).

English speech is one area where many EFL learners find themselves out of their depth (Bai & Yuan, 2019). Some learners believe that pronunciation is probably the most detrimental aspect of the English language (Burri, Baker & Chen, 2017). In addition, some EFL learners find aspects of supra-segmental phonology in English, such as stress and intonation, a bizarre or incomprehensible concept, especially if such aspects do not exist or are not as versatile in their native language as is the case in English.

English speech is not monotonous. Only in a very limited number of situations do we speak with a fixed, unvarying pitch. At the phrase/sentence level, the rises and falls in pitch result in varying intonation. At the lexical level, the highs and lows in speech are determined by word stress (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2014; Roach, 2009). Stress is a phonetic concept that is quite subtle and defies any easy, straightforward definition.

Arabic-speaking learners of English find stress rather difficult and elusive, and because stress misplacement frequently occurs in morphologically complex suffixed words amongst Saudi EFL learners, in the present study the researchers are mainly interested in exploring stress patterns in the pronunciation of suffixed words as well as in their stems, to find out how the subjects’ placement (or misplacement for that matter) of stress is influenced by suffixation. Because there is little research in the literature on the influence of suffixation on the pronunciation of morphologically complex English words, this study aims to find out whether the errors made by subjects in placing stress are more palpable/ frequent in suffixed words than in their stems. This study also aims to determine whether the stress misplacements are individual and various/haphazard amongst the learners or if there is a pattern in the learners’ stress misplacement. In light of these objectives, the current study will be guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does stress in suffixed words pose a challenge to Saudi EFL learners compared to stress in the uninflected stem?
RQ2: How do the different suffixes influence the assignment of lexical stress in the pronunciation of Saudi EFL learners?
RQ3: Are the errors in lexical stress assignment haphazard, or could they be caused by L1 influence or some other factors?
As for the structure of this paper, it outlines the major stress rules in Standard Arabic and then investigates the pronunciation of a substantial number of suffixed English words by Arabic-speaking EFL learners. Three tables are used to provide examples of the three different types of suffixation discussed below in the Data Collection section. Wherever there is consistency in the misplacement of stress in any given complex word, the stress assignment in that particular word will be tested against the rules of Arabic stress. The aim is to find out whether there is a pattern in the misassignment of stress, and then should a pattern be detected, the next aim is to explore possible causes of that pattern.

Literature Review

**Influence of suffixation on stress placement in English**

Brown (2014) explained that when a suffix is added to the stem of a word, it can influence stress placement in one of three ways, which means suffixes can be tossed into three categories: stress-attracting, stress-preserving and stress-fixing. Stress-attracting suffixes are so-called by Brown because the suffix itself receives the stress. Examples of these suffixes are -ee, -eer, -ese, and -ette. Stress-preserving suffixes do not alter the position of the stress in the word; the stress remains on the same syllable where it was before the addition of the suffix. These suffixes include -able and the eight inflectional suffixes -ed, -ing, third person -(e)s, plural -(e)s, -en, comparative and agentive -er, -est and apostrophe s. Stress-fixing suffixes are ones that the addition of which to the stem causes stress to shift to another syllable within the stem. Examples of these suffixes are -eous, -ious, -ion, -ty, -ic, -graphy and -ive. In the current study, the researchers use the classification put forward by Brown (2014).

**Behavior of Stress in Arabic**

Watson (2011) points out that “Arabic recognizes three weights of a syllable: light, heavy, and superheavy” (p. 2). He identifies light syllables as open syllables that are composed of CV, e.g., ٍ/wa/ (and). A heavy syllable can be open or closed, and it is composed of CVV, e.g., the first syllable in بادر/ baadara/ (He took the initiative); or VVC, e.g., ٍ/ain/ (where); or it could be composed of CVC, e.g., ضع/ḍaʕ/ (put). A superheavy syllable is closed or doubly closed and consists of CVVC, e.g., ٍ/dar/ (neighbour), or of CVCC, e.g., تحت/taʕt/ (under). Watson explains lexical stress rules in Arabic polysyllabic words; these rules are governed first and foremost by syllable weight. He posits that

A. if a final syllable in a word is superheavy, that syllable must receive the primary stress;
B. disyllabic words (those that consist of two syllables) have the stress on the first syllable unless the second is superheavy of course;
C. in words of three syllables or more, the penultimate syllable is stressed unless it is light; when it is light, stress falls on the antepenultimate.

This brief account of lexical stress behavior in Arabic is going to guide the researchers through their analysis of any aberrances/inaccuracies in the assignment of lexical stress by the subjects of the study and will shed light on the possible causes of stress misassignment whenever it happens.
Among the most recent studies on stress assignment in English word stems and their derivatives by EFL learners is Sugahara (2020). He investigates lexical stress in base words and derivatives by Japanese as well as Korean learners of English. There is a shortage in the literature of research on the influence of suffixation on stress assignment by Arabic-speaking EFL learners. The closest study to this theme is perhaps Sadi et al. (2022); the article investigates stress misassignment by Arabic-speaking EFL learners in monosyllabic vs polysyllabic words, simple vs compound words, and contracted vs non-contracted auxiliary verbs. The present study specifically addresses the issue of stress placement in suffixed and non-suffixed words.

Methods
The present study made use of a mixed qualitative-quantitative method. It uses the qualitative method to describe in depth the behavior of stress in the pronunciation of the subjects, and it uses the quantitative method by using statistics to determine whether the errors are idiosyncratic or if any errors are salient, frequent errors that can be seen as a pattern.

Participants
The researchers collected pronunciation data from 112 participants; a systematic sampling method was used, whereby on average 28 students were picked randomly from each of the four academic-year levels in the undergraduate program in the English Department at {University Blinded}. All the participants were students from Saudi Arabia. Data collection took place during the academic year 2020-2021. All participants had Arabic as their mother tongue. They had mainly two different English proficiency levels (intermediate/upper-intermediate and advanced).

Research Instruments
The level of proficiency of each participant was determined via a proficiency test – a former IELTS test that was modified by the researchers specifically for this purpose. Seventy-one students were intermediate/upper-intermediate. Their English proficiency was in the range of CEFR B1 – CEFR B2. 41 participants were advanced learners of English; they were in the CEFR C1 level.

Data Collection
The researchers made a list of random English words that exemplified the three types of suffixes discussed earlier: the stress-attracting (also called stress-carrying) suffixes to be studied in this paper were -ee, -eer, -ese, -ette and -esse; the stress-fixing (also called stress-shifting) suffixes were -eous, -graphy, -ial, -ic, -ion, -ious, -logy, -ive, -ty and verbal -ish; the neutral suffixes (no influence on stress) were -able, -age, -al, -en, comparative and agentic -er, -est, -ful, -ing, -like, -less, -ly, -ment, -ness, -ous, -fy, -wise, -y and adjectival -ish. For each individual suffix in all three categories, 2-4 example suffixed words were used. The researchers attempted to include various words of different syllable counts. However, for each suffix, it was only possible to include words composed of a different number of syllables from other suffixes. Some suffixes exhibited disyllabic words (the minimum number of syllables in a suffixed word), trisyllabic words, quadrisyllabic words, and sometimes words of five or more. For some other suffixes, this was not possible, as only disyllabic or only disyllabic and trisyllabic words existed.

The example words were put into longer utterances (phrases and full sentences) even though the researchers were interested in eliciting pronunciation data on the stimulus words only.
This approach, common practice among researchers such as Parlak and Ziegler (2017), was adopted to make sure that the participants pronounced the stimulus words as naturally as possible, just as they would pronounce them in typical, allegro, spontaneous speech since they had no idea which particular lexical item in the utterance the researchers were interested in. To make sure that the participants’ pronunciation of each utterance (and more importantly the stimulus word in that utterance) was clear, audible and true to their usual pronunciation, the students were asked to pronounce each utterance twice.

The data was collected in a controlled environment. The students were met in a language lab, one student at a time, and they saw the stimulus sentences/phrases on a computer screen. They were asked to use a microphone that was connected to the computer to read the stimulus utterances out loud. The Windows® voice recorder was used in this experiment to record the students’ pronunciations. At the end of each student’s session, that student’s pronunciations were saved as WAV audio files on the computer’s hard drive in a separate folder bearing the student’s name. At the end of the recording sessions, the researchers had 112 folders on the computer’s hard drive for the 112 students who participated in the study. Due to a large number of participants, the recording sessions were carried out on three consecutive days, with an average of 37 students each day.

**Stimulus Words**

The stimulus words were all common-core, familiar English words, and they were random words that encompassed the suffixation examples and their accompanying stress placement issues where it was likely for the learners to make errors. For each suffix, the researchers tried as much as possible to include words of varying lengths. For example, for the suffix -ment, the researchers used the three stimulus words move (monosyllabic), punish (disyllabic) and entangle (trisyllabic). This was done to investigate how suffixation influenced the subjects’ placement of stress in different words of different lengths / differing syllable counts. Eventually, the researchers came up with a list of 11 suffixed words for the first category (stress-attracting suffixes), 42 suffixed words for the second category (stress-preserving suffixes), and 27 suffixed derivatives for the third category (stress-fixing suffixes). The suffixed derivatives were 80 in total. But it is important to note here that the number of root words/stems was slightly different; that is because some suffixed derivatives had bound stems. Those bound morphemes could not be used in this study as stimulus words for the subjects to pronounce because they were not free-standing, meaningful English words.

**Data Analysis**

The three researchers, each on their own to strengthen inter-rater reliability, listened to all the pronunciations elicited from the students and assigned the stress placement to each word as pronounced by the particular student. Moreover, three raters who were not involved in this study, all of whom were either phoneticians or linguists with a proven interest in phonology, listened to the data and assigned the stress placement in every single word according to what they heard. At the end of this initial stage, the three researchers and the three raters met and compared their collected data. Whenever there was disagreement amongst the researchers and/or the raters with regards to stress assignment in a particular word from a particular participant, the pronunciation of that word was played back a few times until all the researchers and raters were confident that
they had correctly identified the syllable that was stressed in that particular instance exactly as uttered by the participant.

Once all pronunciations had been discussed amongst the authors and the raters and the stress placement data approved by all six of them, the authors created three tables for the three types of suffixes. Using IPA transcription, the tables showed the correct pronunciations of all stimulus words and the subjects’ mispronunciations (if any) of the stimulus words (both the suffixed derivatives and their uninflected stems). The correct pronunciation transcriptions were copied from Wells’ (2008) Longman Pronunciation Dictionary. The erroneous pronunciations were transcribed by the researchers themselves. The three tables also showed for every stimulus word the numbers (n) and percentages (100n/112) of the students who assigned stress to the wrong syllable in that particular word.

The main aim of the paper is to find out whether stress misassignment in English words by Arabic-speaking EFL learners is more common in suffixed (morphologically complex) words than in non-suffixed (simple) words, and whether stress misplacement exhibits a pattern that can be attributed to L1 influence.

**Research Procedures**

The researchers made a list of random English words of varying lengths and morphological complexity that were going to be used in the data collection phase. Those words were called the stimulus words, and they were 80 in total. The stimulus words were put into utterances (phrases and full sentences), which the subjects were asked to read out loud into a voice recorder. The students were met in a language lab, one student at a time, and they saw the stimulus sentences/phrases on a computer screen. As explained in the Data Collection section, each utterance had to be read out twice by the participant. A hundred and twelve participants were randomly selected from the Department of English at PSAU in the academic year 2020-2021. The process of data collection lasted for three days. In the next phase, the researchers and three raters listened to all pronunciations and analyzed and transcribed the gathered pronunciation data independently of each other. That phase lasted for another two weeks. In the third phase, the researchers and the raters met and discussed the results and ensured they had correctly identified the stressed syllable in each stimulus word for each participant. As explained in the Data Analysis section, the researchers then created three tables for the three types of suffixes. The tables showed the correct pronunciations of all stimulus words and the actual pronunciations from the participants, as well as statistics on the numbers and percentages of mispronunciations for each stimulus word. This data was used in the discussion to investigate the patterns as well as the idiosyncrasies of stress misplacement among the participants.

**Results**

Appendix A (stress-attracting suffixes) shows that, of the nine free-morpheme base words, two words had the stress placed on the wrong syllable by most of the students: in *refuge*, stress was placed on the second syllable instead of the first by 91% of the students, and *evacuate* was stressed on the ultimate syllable instead of the second by 93%. Appendix A also shows that, of the 11 suffixed derivatives, three words with the same suffix were mispronounced by most students. Those were the *-ette* suffixed words. The two *-esque* stimulus words also seem to have posed a
pronunciation challenge to some of the students. More than two-thirds of the participants mispronounced the word picturesque. A cursory glance at Appendices B and C indicates that a good number of stimulus words, both the stems and the derivatives, had the stress placed on the correct syllable by all students. In Appendix B, among the stems that were mispronounced was the word comfort. Just over half the respondents placed the stress on the second syllable instead of on the first. Comfortable was mispronounced by 37+36=73% of the subjects. In Appendices B and C, no participants mispronounced the words smart, Dublin, bride, critic, short, anchor, wood, big, funny, thank, wonder, complete, grace, repulsive, method, geology, civil, civility, possible, possibility, admissible or admissibility. For these words, it seems that the morphological structure did not have an impact on the students’ correct placement of stress. However, morphologically complex words like intoxicating, probably, entanglement, obligingness and indicative were mispronounced by most.

Discussion

It is assumed that L1 influence is highly likely to be the cause of an erroneous stress pattern when it is systematic and almost exclusively uniform (Sadi et al., 2022; Sugahara, 2020). Later in this section, there will be a lavish and detailed discussion of this mispronunciation with frequent reference to Arabic stress assignment rules as explained by Watson (2011) that were briefly outlined earlier in this study in the section on ‘Behavior of stress in Arabic’, and which are named rules A, B and C in this study.

Naturally then, whereas cases of correct pronunciation in the elicited data may not be very revealing, incorrect pronunciations – when uniform and consistent – can only be suggestive of some recurring and consistent influence. That error uniformity could be imputed to L1 influence, or it could be some ‘fossilized’ erroneous pronunciation practice that through years came to be so common that it is now almost the norm.

The word refuge is a disyllabic word. The syllable structure of the word is CVC.CVVC (where C stands for consonant, V for vowel, VV for long vowel or diphthong). According to Watson (2011), a disyllabic word in Arabic should have stress on the first syllable unless the second is superheavy. The second syllable in refuge, from an Arabic phonology perspective, is superheavy (CVVC), and since the vast majority of the subjects misplaced the stress in a way that sits well with Arabic phonology, that may be a powerful indicator that L1 influence is the culprit.

The word evacuate is quadri-syllabic, and it was ‘mis-stressed’ by even a larger portion of the participants. This word, however, may pose both an interesting issue and a challenge to the analysis. If the stress misplacement here were to be ascribed to L1 interference, then the stress would be placed on the penultimate syllable according to Watson (2011) because the ultimate syllable /eɪt/ (VVC) is not superheavy, provided the penultimate is heavy. But since the penultimate here /ju/ (CV) is light, the stress should shift to the antepenultimate syllable if L1 were at play: the subjects would have assigned the stress correctly, i.e. on the antepenultimate, which happens to be the correct stressed syllable in this word /ɪˈvæk.ju.eɪt/. But that is not what happened. This means that although the vast majority of the students made exactly the same error, the phonology of their L1, deeply entrenched in their brains, may not have been the cause of this error. What then could have instigated this almost unanimous error?
This error could be explicated if we dig deeper into the syllabification of the word. At face value, the final syllable in *evacuate* may be judged, from the perspective of MSA phonology, to be a heavy syllable and not a super heavy one. However, the preceding syllable has the round-back vowel /u/ as its nucleus. Unless the speaker produces a glottal stop at the end of the syllable /ju/ prior to the syllable /eɪt/, as is the case in some English accents, the rounding feature of the vowel /u/ results in a pronunciation that sounds more like /iˈvæk.ju.eɪt/ than /iˈvæk.ju.ɪt/. The insertion of the /w/ consonant seems to serve the purpose of liaising the two vowels and making the pronunciation sound more seamless. This is in theory similar to the insertion of the linking /r/ and the intrusive /r/ in non-rhotic accents to achieve liaison and avoid uttering a word/phrase that sounds broken by a glottal stop. If the new proposed transcription of *evacuate* held true for how the participants viewed the word, then the ultimate syllable becomes superheavy (CVVC), and only then is it likely that most of them were beguiled by interference from their mother tongue into misplacing stress: they ended up placing stress on the ultimate superheavy syllable in the quadri-syllabic word because the phonology of their L1 dictated them to do so. However, it should be noted here that this type of evidence is by no means conclusive. It is one possible explanation of why most students misplaced the stress in this word, but there is definitely no infallible proof to ascertain that L1 interference must be the culprit.

Interestingly, whereas *refuge* was mispronounced by most students, its suffixed derivative was pronounced correctly by everyone. *Evacuate* was mispronounced by most, whereas its suffixed derivative was pronounced properly by more than half of the subjects. Provisionally, the researchers expected suffixed derivatives to pose a greater challenge to the learners in terms of stress placement than their stems, but those observations from Appendix A seem to flout the researchers’ initial assumption.

Naturally, when a word is pronounced correctly by EFL learners, it should be assumed that they are familiar with the correct pronunciation. However, it may be interesting to delve deeper into the phonological makeup of those words that were correctly articulated and to test them against the phonology of the learners’ L1. Since the learners do regularly mispronounce other words, and there are indications that their L1 is at play, it could hold true then that some words are correctly pronounced simply because their stress just happens to agree with the learners’ L1.

The word *refugee* is tri-syllabic. If the learners’ pronunciation of this word were to be dictated by L1 phonology, then the stress would be placed on the antepenultimate syllable /ref/ and not on the penultimate because the penultimate is a light syllable. But none of the students placed the stress on the first syllable. This incontestably shows that L1 interference had no role at all in this example. This is an interesting case that shows clearly that the subjects do pronounce some words correctly despite the fact that the MSA phonology may dictate otherwise. This can only be taken to mean that whenever the learners mis-assign the lexical stress in any given word, it is a sweeping statement to say the cause of this error is L1 interference, even if the error happens to testify to this assumption. It is also interesting to see examples in the elicited data of how the students may sometimes misplace stress in words where, if they applied L1 phonology, they would end up placing the stress correctly. For example, *ambitious* in Appendix C had the stress placed on the first syllable instead of the penultimate by a large percentage (76%). This error cannot be
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imputed to L1 interference because according to rule C of MSA stress, the penultimate should be stressed in this trisyllabic word.

Another interesting finding from Appendix A is that the -ette derivatives were all mispronounced by most of the subjects, whereas their respective stems/roots were pronounced correctly, needless to say that the word brunette, however, did not have a free-morpheme stem anyway. As for launder and suffer, it is natural that the first syllable in each of them was stressed because the second syllable had a shwa at its nucleus. The schwa is a lax vowel that can never receive stress. It is not surprising then that all students pronounced those two words correctly. The words laundrette and brunette are both disyllabic. Their syllabic structures are CVVCC.CVC and CCVV.CVC, respectively. If we assume for the sake of argument that both of those words were mis-stressed due to L1 interference, the assumption does make sense, because the second syllable in each word is not superheavy, and so according to rule B in the ‘Behavior of stress in Arabic’ section, stress should be placed on the first syllable, which most of the students did. The word suffragette (CVC.CV.CVC) is trisyllabic. 95% of the students erroneously placed the stress on the first syllable instead of on the ultimate. Again, could this sweeping error be explained by recourse to MSA phonology? Rule C requires the penultimate syllable in a word of more than two syllables to be stressed if the ultimate is not superheavy, but since the penultimate in the word suffragette is light (CV), the stress had to shift to the first syllable, resulting in the faulty pronunciation /ˈsʌf.ræ.dʒət/. Accordingly, it seems possible to assume that the -ette suffixed words were all mispronounced by most of the subjects due to clear interference from their mother tongue.

The suffixes -eer and -ese do not seem to pose any problems for the learners. The word picturesque (CVC.CV.CVCC) is again a trisyllabic word, and the ultimate syllable is super heavy. If the students were to apply rules of MSA phonology to this word, they should place the stress on the ultimate syllable then, but more than two-thirds of them did not. At this point, it can be conjectured that the errors in stress assignment committed by the subjects are somewhat complicated and cannot be explained simply by assuming that their mother tongue is dictating those errors because although some errors do strongly indicate that L1 influence is at play, there are other errors that are commonly committed by most of the students and that do not testify to this assumption.

An attempt to explicate why comfort was stressed on the second syllable by recourse to MSA phonology may be revealing. In the erroneous pronunciation transcribed in the second column /kʌmˈfɔːrt/, the students seem to have replaced the schwa with the long vowel /ɔː/, which changed the syllable makeup from CV(C)C to CVVCC. The latter structure would have been seen by those students as a superheavy syllable, and this likely is why they placed the stress on it. The same argument can be applied to the -able adjective derivative comfortable, which was mispronounced by 37+36=73% of the subjects. The stress was likely placed on the second syllable instead of on the first in this quadri-syllabic word following rule C of MSA stress. If this were the case, it could then be provisionally deduced that Arabic-speaking EFL learners’ placement of stress in suffixed words is more readily influenced by syllable structure and syllable weight than by what type of suffix is in question.
Because *shortage* and *anchorage* were mis-stressed by only a tiny fraction of the students, those two words will be overlooked in the discussion as they do not represent a pattern. The -*al* derivatives were all stressed correctly. Of course, this could be so because the learners were well aware of the correct pronunciation. But again for the sake of argument, if we attempted to test those words against MSA rules, the test may be suggestive of L1 influence, although there is no way to confirm this for certain.

The word *forbid* and its -*en* derivative *forbidden* present an interesting case. The disyllabic stem was mispronounced by most of the students, while the trisyllabic derivative was pronounced correctly by more than two-thirds of the students. The mispronunciation /ˈfɔːr.bɪd/ sits well with rule B of MSA stress, and the erroneous /ˈfɔːr.bi.dən/ sits well with rule C. It is becoming more and more obvious that in many cases stress assignment is dictated by the number of syllables in a given word, the syllable structure in that word and syllable weight, rather than by the type of suffix that happens to be attached to the word.

The word *wonder* was pronounced correctly by everyone, but its derivative *wonderful* was mispronounced by the vast majority of the students although -*ful* is a stress-preserving suffix. Again, L1 interference may explain this. Placing the stress on the first syllable in disyllabic /ˈwʌnd.a/ agrees with rule B, and on the penultimate in the trisyllabic /wʌnd.əˈfʊl/ agrees with rule C of MSA stress, needless to say, changing the vowel in the penultimate syllable in *wonderful* from the lax, un-stressable schwa to the slightly stronger, stressable /ʌ/ made it possible to place stress on the penultimate.

Rule C may explain why the stress was placed on the wrong syllable by the vast majority of the subjects in each of the following words from Appendix B: /ˈɪn.tɪk.ɪt.ɪŋ.tʃ/, /ˈɑːbl.əˈdʒɪŋ.nəs/, /ˈhæz.ər.əs/, /ˈæ.əˈwaːz/ (ultimate is superheavy), and also in each of the following words from Appendix C: /ˈklaɪ.mət.ɪk/ (penultimate has a schwa, so stress shifted to antepenultimate), /ˈæm.biʃ.əs/ and /ˈæ.ɡres.ɪv/. These are further examples suggesting interference from L1 phonology.

In summation, an attempt to account for lexical stress misassignment by Arabic-speaking EFL learners may not be straightforward; it is rather convoluted and in many cases inconsistent, making it extremely difficult to draw a clear-cut pattern that can unequivocally explain all such stress assignment errors heard often in the pronunciation of the subjects. The research questions have been addressed briefly earlier already, and it is apt to make a revisit to those questions at this point.

RQ1
Analysis of the elicited data does not suggest that suffixed derivatives present a greater challenge to Saudi EFL learners than do their derivatives in terms of stress assignment. It sometimes happened that the learners misplaced the stress in the stem but placed it correctly in the more morphologically complex derivative.

RQ2
The type of suffix attached to a word does not seem to play an important role in influencing stress assignment in that word in the pronunciation of the subjects of the study. Rather, syllable count,
syllable structure and syllable weight appear to have a more obvious effect on stress assignment in most of the words where stress was mis-assigned.

RQ3
A good number of stress assignment errors could be explained by reference to MSA rules of stress assignment, i.e., there was a clear indication of L1 interference, but no definitive conclusion could be drawn in this regard since there were also a lot of cases of mispronunciation that did not seem to follow a clear-cut pattern.

Conclusion
This study aimed to investigate how Arabic-speaking EFL learners at {University Blinded} in Saudi Arabia assign lexical stress in word roots/stems and their suffixed derivatives, to find out whether stress in suffixed words presented a greater challenge to the learners than stress in the root words; the study also aimed to examine whether errors in stress assignment exhibited a palpable pattern, in which case L1 influence would most probably be the cause of this error. It was found that mistakes are rife, not only in morphologically complex words of three syllables and more but also in morphologically simple, disyllabic words. Interestingly, the number one trigger of stress misassignment was not found to be suffixation; in fact, the type of suffix attached to a word does not seem to matter as much as the number of syllables, the structure of the syllables and the weight of syllables in a given word. Another finding was that a large number of cases of stress misassignment can be explained by recourse to MSA phonology, which means L1 influence is very much ‘alive and kicking’ in triggering those errors. However, it has been shown that there are also some cases of such errors that cannot by any means be attributed to L1 interference because they simply do not conform to MSA rules.

Limitations and Future Research
Many of the examples of stress misassignment do suggest that L1 interference may be at play, but there are a good number of errors that seem to be committed by a large portion of the subjects of the study that cannot be explicited in any way by reference to L1 interference. Since such errors do seem to follow a particular pattern but at the same time do not exhibit L1 influence, they should be an intriguing and unique area for further research. This phenomenon is beyond the scope of this study.

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References


### Appendix A. Stress-attracting suffixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base word and its correct pronunciation</th>
<th>Mispronunciation(s)</th>
<th>No. (out of 112) and % of Mispronunciations</th>
<th>Suffixed derivatives and their correct pronunciation</th>
<th>Mispronunciation(s)</th>
<th>No. (out of 112) and % of Mispronunciations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>refuge /ˈrefju:dʒ/</td>
<td>/refˈjuːdʒ/</td>
<td>91 (81%)</td>
<td>-ee refugee /refˈjuːdʒiː/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evacuate /ɪˈvæk.ju.ɪt/</td>
<td>/i.ˈvæk.ju.ˈɪt/</td>
<td>93 (83%)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>/i.ˈvæk.ju.ˈɪt/</td>
<td>53 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mountain /ˈmaʊнт.nɪŋ/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-eer mountaineer /maʊнт.nɪˈnəʊ/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engine /ˈen.dʒɪn/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>engineer /en.ˈdʒɪn.ɪər/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China /ˈtʃaɪn.a/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-ese Chinese /tʃaɪˈniːz/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan /dʒəˈpæn/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Japanese /dʒə.ˈpæniːz/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>launder /ˈlɑːn.də/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-ette laundrette /ˈlɑːnd.ˌret/</td>
<td>/ˈlɑːnd.ˌret/</td>
<td>93 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>brunette /ˈbru.ˌnet/</td>
<td>/ˈbru.ˌnet/</td>
<td>82 (73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suffer /ˈsʌf.ʃər/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>suffragette /ˈsʌf.rə.ˈdʒət/</td>
<td>/ˈsʌf.rə.ˈdʒət/</td>
<td>95 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>grotesque /ˈɡrəʊt.əsk/</td>
<td>/ˈɡrəʊt.əsk/</td>
<td>16 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picture /ˈpɪktʃər/</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>picturesque /ˈpɪktʃər.ˈesk/</td>
<td>/ˈpɪktʃər.ˈesk/</td>
<td>77 (69%)</td>
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</table>

### Appendix B. Stress-preserving suffixes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Base word and its correct pronunciation</th>
<th>Mispronunciation(s)</th>
<th>No. (out of 112) and % of Mispronunciations</th>
<th>Suffixed derivatives and their correct pronunciation</th>
<th>Mispronunciation(s)</th>
<th>No. (out of 112) and % of Mispronunciations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>/ˈkʌm.foʊt/</td>
<td>52 (46%)</td>
<td>-able</td>
<td>/ˈkʌm.foʊ.tə.bəl/</td>
<td>41 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfort</td>
<td>/ˈkʌm.foʊ.rt/</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>/ˈkʌm.foʊ.tə.bəl/</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short</td>
<td>/ʃɔ:t/</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>/ʃɔ.tɪdʒ/</td>
<td>12 (11%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>anchor</td>
<td>/ˈæŋ.kə/</td>
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<td>/ˈæŋ.kə.r.ɪdʒ/</td>
<td>9 (8%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>bride</td>
<td>/ˈbreɪd/</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>/ˈbreɪ.dəl/</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critic</td>
<td>/ˈkrɪt.ɪk/</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>/ˈkrɪ.t.ɪ.kəl/</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
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<td>phenomenon</td>
<td>/faʊˈnəm.ɪn.ən/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>/faʊ.ˈnəm.ɪn.əl/</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>wood</td>
<td>/ˈwʊd/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>/ˈwʊd.ən/</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>forbid</td>
<td>/fɔˈbɪd/</td>
<td>/ˈfɔr.bɪd/</td>
<td>79 (71%)</td>
<td>/ˈfɔr.ˈbɪ.dən/</td>
<td>31 (28%)</td>
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<td>/smɑː.tə/</td>
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<td>condition</td>
<td>/kənˈdɪʃ.ən/</td>
<td>/ˈkən.dɪʃ.ən/</td>
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<td>life</td>
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<td>/mˈtɒk.ˌsi.ˈkɛɪt/</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>/ˈprəb.əˈbɑː/</td>
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<td>Misprediction (s)</td>
<td>No. (out of 112) and % of Misprediction</td>
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<td>none</td>
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<td>hazardous /ˈhæz.ə.dəs/</td>
<td>/ˈhæz.ər.dəs/</td>
</tr>
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<td>/daɪˈvɜːs/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-fy diversify /daɪˈvɜːst.əf/</td>
<td>/daɪ.ɜːst.əf/</td>
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<td>glory</td>
<td>/ˈɡlɔːrɪ/</td>
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<td>glorify /ˈɡlɔːrɪ.əf/</td>
<td>/ɡlɔːrɪ.əf/</td>
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<tr>
<td>clock</td>
<td>/klɒk/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>-wise clockwise /klɒk.waɪz/</td>
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<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>/ˈʌð.ə/</td>
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<td>otherwise /ˈʌð.ə.waɪz/</td>
<td>/ʌð.ə.ˈwaɪz/</td>
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<td>-y brainy /ˈbreɪn.i/</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>leathery /ˈleɪθə.ə.rɪ/</td>
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<td>foolish</td>
<td>/ˈfuːl.ɪʃ/</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>adjetival -ish foolish /ˈfuː.ɪʃ/</td>
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### Appendix C. Stress-fixing suffixes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base word and its correct pronunciation</th>
<th>Misprediction</th>
<th>No. (out of 112) and % of Misprediction</th>
<th>Suffixed derivatives and their correct pronunciations</th>
<th>Misprediction</th>
<th>No. (out of 112) and % of Misprediction</th>
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<tr>
<td>courage</td>
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<td>-eous courageous /ˈkær.ədʒ.əs/</td>
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<td>word</td>
<td>stress placement</td>
<td>error</td>
<td>word</td>
<td>stress placement</td>
<td>error</td>
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<td>lexicography</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>partial</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>proverb</td>
<td>103 (92%)</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>residential</td>
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<td>climatic</td>
<td>73 (65%)</td>
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<td>analytic</td>
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<td>15 (13%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>indicative</td>
<td>99 (88%)</td>
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<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Correct Stress Placement</td>
<td>Correct Pronunciation</td>
<td>Note</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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<td>none</td>
<td></td>
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<td>/ˈsɪv.əl/</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-ish</td>
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<td>-</td>
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An Examination of the Impact of Teachers’ Functional Questions on Students’ Oral Production in Algerian EFL Classrooms

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Abstract
This research explores the functions of questions used by EFL teachers and the impact they have on students’ oral production. The main aim is to examine the distribution of questioning techniques and the length of language output elicited by each category. The study will fill the research gap, in the local context, regarding the effects of functional questions on the length of students’ responses. The following main question is sought to be answered: What is the epistemic category of questions that can prompt students to produce more extended language output in EFL? The study involves descriptive correlational research that makes use of a quantitative method for answering the research questions. It implements Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy (based on Kearsley, 1976) for the categorization of functional questions. The database of this study included 566 questions, of which 420 were epistemic and 111 were echoic in function. The data collection procedure took place at the departments of English of two academic institutions, namely: the University of El Chadli Ben Djedid-El Tarf and the University of Badji Mokhtar-Annaba. The major findings of the study revealed that despite the primacy of referential questions in eliciting learners to produce lengthier language output, evaluative questions were more frequently asked by teachers. Further research is needed to be carried out in the context of Algeria to reach more comprehensive results.

Keywords: Functional questions, Algerian EFL classrooms, language output, referential questions evaluative questions

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Introduction

Classroom discourse research has been allotted much attention in the fields of second and foreign language learning. Among the defining aspects that characterize classroom discourse is the prevalence of teachers’ questions as they play an essential role in prompting students to produce and participate through the target language (Wright, 2016). The emphasis on questioning strategies is manifested in the practice of language teachers inside classrooms as the average amount of instructional time allocated to classroom questions range from thirty-five percent to fifty percent of the overall time of lessons (Cotton, 1988). Teachers’ dependence on questions stems from their need to engage students in discussing content to ensure the co-construction of knowledge, which can eventually lead to better learning outcomes.

Since the norms of classroom discourse are different from those existing in casual conversations which take place outside pedagogical settings, students often wait for their teachers to ask questions before speaking since interrogatives can be considered the signal that grants students the permission to talk. This is due to the fact that teacher-student talk is embedded with an imbalance of status and power between interlocutors, because of the teacher being in possession of higher authority over students and regularly holding the role of a primary knower during classroom discourse (Burton, 1981; Thwaite, Jones, & Simpson, 2020). That being the case, the output produced by learners is often supplied in the form of responses to the questions that teachers pose in their quest to elicit information from learners about content or form in the target language. It is important to note that the language output that students produce is believed to be one of the main factors that drive the process of language acquisition (Gass, 1997). To highlight the role of language production as a fundamental element of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Swain (1985) argued that language output may indeed play an essential part in triggering learners toward attending to the required linguistic forms and communicative resources needed for conveying the intended meaning. The causal relationship between classroom questions and the students’ language output is apparent because, simply put, teachers’ questioning behavior is what often brings students to engage in content discussion (Brock, 1986).

Classroom questions occupy a large portion of the whole time that a lesson takes, and therefore understanding classroom interaction requires exploring the nature of the questions used in classroom. Based on the same premise, the outcome of EFL courses and the shape of discourse are partially related to the questioning techniques that teachers use during verbal interaction (Brock, 1986). The smoothness of the course delivery and how communication proceeds are associated with the questioning techniques teachers employ to convey information to students. Moreover, the language output produced by students is an essential factor for language learning development (Swain, 1995), and students’ language production is often bound to happen due to the questions asked by teachers. Therefore, success in delivering an effective instructive course entails developing questions that promote the teacher to act as an initiator and sustainer of interaction, and that encourage students’ production (Brown, 2014). Yet, to reach an understanding about which questions may guarantee better learning, there is a need to study the nature of the questioning techniques used in EFL classrooms and the effects they have on learners’ oral production in the first place. The lack of observational and empirical research in Algeria regarding this research subject is problematic. There is therefore a need to conduct initial
quantitative research to investigate the nature of teachers’ questions and their influence on the length of students’ oral production.

It is worth noting that many researchers have attempted to examine classroom discourse in the context of Algerian EFL classrooms. Still, only a few of them made use of analytic schemes for the systematic analysis of discourse. Despite that a lot of studies about classroom questions, at a global level, adopted taxonomic and quantitative paradigms (Ellis, 2012), there is still a scarcity of research in the local context in respect to the implementation of questions’ analytical schemes. To our best knowledge, the present study, adopting Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy, is the first to be implementing the model in the local context of Algeria.

The objectives of this research are to identify the distributions of functional questions across Algerian EFL classrooms and the resulting length of output that would be stimulated by each questioning category. Since epistemic questions lie at the core of any content-oriented language classroom, we will also solicit to gauge the significance of the numerical differences in the length means of responses which correspond to evaluative and referential questions.

This paper aims to answer the following main questions:
1-What is the overall mean length of students’ responses to functional questions in Algerian EFL classrooms?
2- What is the distribution of functional questions used by teachers?
3-What is the average amount of language output elicited by each functional type of questions?
4- What is the epistemic category of questions that can prompt students to produce more extended language output in EFL?

The following null/alternative hypotheses are put forward:
-\( H_0 \) (null): There is no significant difference between the distributions of evaluative and referential questions and the length means of language output elicited by each category.
-\( H_1 \) (alternative): There is a significant difference between the distributions of evaluative and referential questions and the length means of language output elicited by each category.

The present paper will attempt to offer an overview about relevant key concepts and a number of related studies, as we will initially review the previous literature along with the pertinent analytical models that were devised for the categorization of questioning techniques. Subsequently, we will elaborate the adopted research methodology, and then proceed by presenting results and discussing the findings that we have attained through the systematic analysis of data.

Literature Review

In the last few decades, classroom discourse has gained much attention in the field of language studies. The nature of language used in classrooms is often distinct in form and function from other communication contexts (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Among the communicative aspects that characterize classroom discourse from natural discourse is the prevalence of pedagogical questions. Bellack, Kliebard, Hyman and Smith (1966) considered the interaction that happens inside the classroom to follow four moves: structuring, soliciting, responding and
reacting. The soliciting move that the teacher makes to elicit a response is often supplied in the form of a question (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). The consequent following moves (responding and reacting) are partially dependent on the question asked in the soliciting act, which is usually performed by the teacher. Such an important role that questions play in shaping classroom discourse is frequently highlighted in literature (e.g., Brown & Lee, 2015; Dalton-puffer, 2007; Tsui, 1995).

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), in their pioneering work about classroom discourse, proposed another pattern that has been seen as a typical model which elaborates the nature of exchanges taking place during teacher-student talk. The suggested pattern constitutes three main moves: initiation, response, follow-up (or evaluation). It is often referred to as the IRF model, and it has been widely used to explain and examine classroom discourse. In this model, questions are considered to play a crucial role in driving the process of communication since initiation moves are frequently issued through interrogatives. In this context, Richards and Schmidt (2010) stated that “in this typical three-part structure, the teacher initiates a question in order to check a student’s knowledge, a student responds, and the student’s responses evaluated with feedback from the teacher” (p.80). Ellis (2012) also pointed out that “a teacher question is likely to occupy the first part of the ubiquitous three-phase initiate–respond–follow-up (IRF) exchange” (p. 120). He explained further the prevalence of questions by associating them with the power of control they give to the teacher since they enable the questioner to take over the discourse. Thus, they constitute a key element of interaction that allows the teacher to deliver content while engaging students in constructing knowledge and guiding them toward attaining teaching-learning objectives. In brief, making use of questions is fundamental if the teacher wants to avoid rendering his/her course into an extended monologue.

There are many taxonomies and classifications that have been designed to study the nature of teachers’ questioning techniques. Thompson (1997) highlighted that questions can be categorized differently according to their form, content, or purpose (function). As far as this study is concerned, questions are examined based on the function they serve since the purposive nature of questions is perceived to have an impact on variables related to learners’ achievements (e.g., length and complexity of learners’ language output). Among the influential taxonomies that have been designed to categorize questions according to their function is Long and Sato’s (1983) taxonomy. This categorization model was adapted from the work of Kearsley (1976) in which they classified question according to a set of functional categories. Long and Sato’s (1983) taxonomy subsumed teachers’ questions into echoic and epistemic types and then sub-categorized these into two sets of categories; each category set pertained either to the echoic or epistemic type of questions. More importantly, the major contribution lied in the identification of two functional categories called referential and display questions, which Long and Sato’s (1983) included under the umbrella type of epistemic questions (as cited in Ellis, 2012). Later on, this typology became a trend of classification as many scholars accounted for display and referential questions in order to examine the effectiveness of questioning techniques used inside ESL/EFL classrooms (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). Despite that numerous quantitative analytical studies have addressed the effects of functional questions on learners’ language output in many language learning contexts, the research issue remains unresolved in Algeria. That is, a research gap is identified in the local context of EFL education.
Related Studies

There has been a significant amount of research directed toward investigating the role of display (evaluative) and referential questions in second/foreign language classrooms. As mentioned before, one of the influential studies that dealt with this subject is embodied in the work of Long and Sato (1983) in which they explored the effects of the two questioning categories on the oral production of learners. The major findings in their study indicated that display questions were more frequently used in ESL classrooms than it was the case for their referential counterparts. Moreover, they pointed out that despite the observed scarcity of referential questions, the latter may lead to longer and more authentic responses than display questions (Shomoossi, 2004).

Drawing on their work, Brock (1986) conducted a study to examine whether there is a causal relationship between the nature of epistemic questions and students’ responses in terms of length and complexity of output. To achieve this purpose, she compared treatment groups whose teachers were trained to ask more referential questions with control groups whose teachers were not exposed to such training. The results showed that students in treatment groups, who were subjected to more referential questions, produced longer and more complex output than those in control groups who were not subjected to an equal amount of referential questions. That is to say, the study revealed that referential questions were more effective in enhancing the quality and length of the language output produced by students.

In another study, Wright (2016) conducted similar research investigating the effects of display and referential questions on output quantity through an analysis of both the length and complexity of students’ utterances following each strategy of questioning. The findings showed that referential questions have more potential to push learners toward producing more extended output. Also, the results revealed that referential questions increased the negotiation of meaning and prompted learners toward producing accurate utterances. Wright suggested further that referential questions may have positive effects on the process of second language development.

In the local context of Algeria, there has been a lack of research on this subject. Nevertheless, Khadraoui (2016) attempted to explore teachers’ and students’ attitudes regarding the use of display and referential questions. Because of the purpose of the study, she did not examine the effectiveness of the two types of questions drawing on an experimental or an analytic observational design. The study was instead based on a survey that reported teachers’ and students’ attitudinal beliefs about each questioning strategy. To achieve that objective, she used questionnaires directed at both teachers and students to inquire about the attitudes they have with respect to the two categories. The findings showed that the majority of participants held positive attitudes in favor of referential questions and the advantages they can bring about to classroom interaction.

A recent study by Liu and Gillies (2021) explored the effects of referential and display questions on mediated-learning behaviors through a qualitative analysis of five English lessons in Chinese high schools. The study concluded that referential questions are more likely to trigger more diversified mediated-learning strategies, as they were conducive of more extensive interactive episodes. In addition, the findings suggested that referential questions may lead to the generation of more complex responses and lengthier output in the target language. Furthermore,
in another study within the Chinese context of EFL learning, Liu (2022) compared the questioning strategies used by local and foreign teachers in China. The researcher concluded that both local and foreign language educators were aware about the importance of referential questions. Yet, Chinese teachers failed to recognize their usefulness in extending the learners’ oral production.

However, some studies have revealed contradictory findings that do not support the conception of referential questions as being superior to display questions. David (2007) carried out a study to investigate the influence of these two functional categories on the quality of teacher-learner interaction at the level of Nigerian middle schools. The result showed that 85% of the questions that were used belonged to the display category, while only 15% of the questions were referential. More importantly, the study concluded that referential questions do not encourage the learners to participate and teachers should exploit more display questions to increase learners’ engagement and involvement within Nigerian ESL classrooms. Furthermore, Van Lier (1988) and Seedhouse (1996) questioned the purpose of such functional distinction in the first place. They argued that regardless of whether questions are authentic or not, what should be accounted for is the language eliciting force served by teachers’ questions since they are both conducive to an IRF cycle.

**Functional Questions**

Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy, which is used in this research, also makes use of the highlighted dichotomy as it divides the epistemic type of questions into evaluative (display) and referential questions. However, it is based fundamentally on the work of Kearsley (1976) as it classifies questions into four rather than two types of functional questions. In this classification model, the echoic type of questions is marked by instances in which confirmation checks and clarification requests are asked. Kearsley (1976) elucidated that “echoic questions are those which ask for repetition of an utterance or confirmation that an utterance has been interpreted as intended” (p. 360). As the name suggests, these kinds of questions echo what the student has said either by issuing a repetition or seeking clarification about a given utterance (Long, 1981). These can act as strategies for negotiating meaning (Long, 1996) or supplying implicit corrective feedback in the form of a prompt (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). For instance, Gass, Behney, and Plonsky (2013) pointed out that it is not uncommon for scholars to consider that the sort of “feedback obtained through negotiation serves a corrective function” (p.362). Likewise, Ellis (2021) encapsulated clarification requests and confirmation checks within the implicit class of feedback and defined any implicit feedback move as being “one where the corrective force is masked because it is potentially performing some other function (e.g., topic continuation or the negotiation of meaning)” (p.341). Like the case of echoic questions, the epistemic type, in this model, subdivides into two main categories: evaluative and referential questions. These two categories have been paid with particular attention in second/foreign language studies that investigated classroom questioning techniques (Brock, 1984; Chaudron, 1988; Long & Sato, 1983). Evaluative questions are also called display questions. They refer to those questions that the teacher asks while he/she already knows their answers beforehand, as they merely serve to evaluate or test the learners’ knowledge (e.g., what is the past tense of “make”?)). In other words, the teacher seeks to elicit from the respondent some kind of already known answers or to call for information that the questioner has established at least the parameters about (Brock, 1986; Lee, 2006).
On the other hand, referential questions are seen as being functionally different from evaluative questions since their answers are not known in advance to the questioner (Walsh, 2006). Referential questions are believed to simulate to some extent the questions that happen in real-life situations, and for this reason they are seen to be more authentic than their counterparts (e.g., where do you live? What is your opinion about unemployment in Algeria?). Since referential questions may not be pre-empted with certainty by the questioner, once they are asked, they decrease the teacher’s primary knower status into a secondary knower position. In this regard, Dalton-Puffer (2007) explained that “in situations where these roles are activated, it is the primary knower who asks display questions from the secondary knower; in situations where the distinction is irrelevant, ‘authentic questions’ are asked” (p. 96). Such a shift of roles that occurs when referential questions are asked is among the reasons that establish the foundation for assuming referential questions to be more authentic and effective in allowing students to produce more output as they promote the communicative language use of the target linguistic system.

In Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy, the third type of questions accounted for represents expressive questions. This functional type is associated with those questions that convey the attitudinal information of the questioner to the addressee. Kearsley (1976) elaborated the main defining aspects of expressive questions by highlighting their peculiar syntactic structures and the corresponding intonation patterns that can hint at the existence of attitudinal bias in the transmitted message. Expressive questions are often issued through tag questions or yes/no questions (e.g., you are coming, aren’t you?). They can transmit various expressive information that can be either neutral, positive, or negative, such as: doubt, confidence, surprise, impatience, etc. (Quirk, Leech, Greenbaum, & Svartvik, 1972; Kearsley, 1976). This kind of questions can signal the attitudinal bias that teachers tend to exhibit while discussing content and the extent of emotional involvement or subjectiveness displayed during the interaction. Moreover, Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy accounted for a fourth type that encompasses social control questions. This last type includes three main categories, namely: social control, attentional and verbosity questions. Social control questions are asked to exert authority and maintain control (e.g., are you listening?). Attentional questions serve a similar but not an identical purpose since they are asked to attract the learners’ attention toward what is being said or to take over the direction of discourse when there is a perceived pedagogical need to intervene. A representative example can be reflected in the case when a student is performing a task or making a presentation, and then the teacher interferes for the sake of taking the floor or for the purpose of elaboration (e.g., can I say something now? may I comment on that?). Verbosity questions, as implied by their literal meaning, are asked for the sake of sustaining speech, maintaining conversation, or avoiding communication breakdowns. Kearsley (1976) highlighted that they “serve to avoid embarrassing silences in conversation and maintain interaction between speakers” (p. 363). They may also be used to keep a friendly atmosphere or a supportive socio-emotional climate (e.g., where is your classmate by the way?)

Methods

This study represents descriptive correlational research that employs an ex-post facto design. The reason behind the used method is associated with the research objectives that aim at exploring the distributions of functional questions in EFL classroom and to gauge the significance of the differences between the length means of responses corresponding to evaluative and referential questions. The process of data collection was based on classroom observations. The
study employs a quantitative method for answering the research questions. Qualitative considerations took place for coding questions in accordance with their distinct functions. That is to say, teachers’ questions were categorized in respect of their underlying qualitative properties (see Chaudron, 1986). Subsequently, data were analyzed statistically to determine the frequencies of occurrence, mean length of students’ responses, and percentages corresponding to each type of questions. The procedure of categorizing questions was based on Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy, while counting the length of students’ responses was adapted from Brock’s (1986) procedure.

This study made use of a binomial test and a t-test for testing hypotheses, since correlational designs enable gauging the significance of relationship (Curtis, Comiskey, & Dempsey, 2016) between independent variables (e.g., epistemic questions) and dependent variables (e.g., length of language output). In this context, Cohen (1968) stated that the purpose of t-tests and other parametric tests is to explore relationships among variables and therefore produce correlational evidence (as cited in Curtis et al., 2016).

Participants

This study took place at the departments of English at the University of El Chadli Ben Djedid-El Tarf and the University of Badji Mokhtar-Annaba, within which four EFL sessions were observed and then analyzed. Purposive-convenience sampling was used in the process of data collection. The observed lessons involved 73 third-grade students with four different EFL teachers during the academic year 2019/2020. Each session of observation occurred after getting permission from the administrative staffs of the two universities. All participants were informed about the content of the research and they gave consent to take part in the study. The linguistic repertoire of the concerned students encompasses Arabic (L1), French (L2), and English (L3) with different degrees of mastery.

Research Instruments

The process of data collection took place during EFL lessons through the use of audio-recordings while backing up the retrieved data with note-taking and the observation of classroom events in real-time. Later on, the audio-recordings of lessons were transcribed and coded according to Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy. That is to say, more than four hours of EFL classroom discourse were recorded and subsequently transcribed for the sake of establishing the means for the procedures of taxonomical categorization and output counting to be carried out.

Research Procedures

In order to assure that the process of categorization has an appropriate level of reliability, another researcher was asked to recode the questions’ functional categories. The level of intercoder reliability was estimated through a “percent agreement” test that measures the reliability of the coding procedure (Lombard, Synder, & Bracken, 2002). A coefficient of 0.85 was deemed as an appropriate level of agreement. The calculated level of agreement between coders was 0.92 (92%), and therefore considered appropriate to proceed in the analysis and interpretation of data.

After the process of categorization, the output of each question was counted, and then the calculation of the length means of students’ responses was carried out in correspondence to the functional nature of questions. Counting students’ output was established drawing on the number of words uttered in response to each questioning technique involved in the used taxonomy (e.g.,
Brock, 1986). All the responses issued by students following teachers’ questions were accounted for while measuring the length of language output. Once the teachers issued a follow-up or feedback move, the questioning episode was considered over, and the counting procedure ceased to operate at that indicative moment. The findings were later described and explained with respect to the research questions. The process of data analysis went through the following phases: identification, classification, calculation, description and explanation of the results. SPSS version 28 was used for the statistical analysis of data, and a p-value of 0.05 was set as a threshold of statistical significance. A binomial test was used to measure the significance of the difference between the distributions of evaluative and referential questions. At the same time, a t-test was implemented to gauge the level of significance between the different means of language output stimulated by the two epistemic categories.

**Results**

To answer the first research question “What is the overall mean length of students’ responses to functional questions in Algerian EFL classrooms?”, the generic length ratio of responses to questioning techniques was calculated. The findings of the study showed that the observed episodes of classroom discourse contained a total number of 566 functional questions asked by teachers while delivering their courses. The total amount of output that learners produced following questions was 2117 words. The average length of output that questions stimulated was therefore 3.74 words per question. The following table illustrates the number of questions asked across EFL lessons along with the language output and mean length of responses in each class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Class C</th>
<th>Class D</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Frequency of questions</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total amount of Language output</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>2117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length of responses</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous table serves to illustrate the total number of questions output and mean ratio of responses regardless of questions’ types and categories. The generic mean length of responses (3.74 words per response) indicates that most of students’ answers constituted brief utterances only, rather than extended or syntactically complex utterances during content discussion.

To answer the second research question “What is the distribution of functional questions used by teachers?”), descriptive statistics were employed to explore the frequencies of occurrence and the proportions of questioning techniques across the examined classes. First, it must be noted that Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy classifies questions into four main types: echoic, epistemic, expressive, and social control questions. In this respect, the findings show that the number of epistemic questions was significantly greater than the number of echoic questions asked during lessons, since a total number of 420 questions were epistemic while only 111 questions were echoic in function. That is to say, epistemic questions constituted 74.20% of questions raised by
teachers and echoic questions composed 19.61% of the whole proportion. Furthermore, the results showed that the two remaining types of questions, namely expressive and social control questions, were not used quite often by language educators. These two types comprised only 6.19% of the overall proportion of questions. Only 11 expressive questions were posed during the observed sessions, composing 1.94% of the questions in the database. The number of interrogatives with a social control function was 24 (including attentional questions), which is equivalent to 4.24%. An absence of verbosity questions was also observed. The low frequency of these two functional types, along with the corresponding sub-categories, cannot offer accurate interpretation about their impact on students’ output. The previous results are illustrated in detail in the Appendix.

As mentioned earlier, in Long and Sato’s (1984) taxonomy, the epistemic type subdivides into two categories: evaluative and referential questions. The former category of questions occurred more frequently than the latter. The frequency of occurrence pertaining to evaluative questions was equal to a sum of 323 questions. It is equivalent to 76.90% of the holistic percentage belonging to the epistemic type, which involved a total of 420 questions. On the other hand, only 97 questions had a referential function, entailing that merely 23.10% of epistemic questions were prone to be authentic. The former results are illustrated below in table 2.

For the purpose of answering the third research question “What is the average amount of language output elicited by each functional type of questions?”, the length means of responses were examined. The ratio of output corresponding to the echoic type was 4.08 words per question and that of epistemic interrogatives constituted 3.82 words per question. Thus, the stimulated output was numerically close in terms of length. Once again, the low frequencies of occurrence corresponding to social control, attentional, and verbosity questions prevented the researchers from identifying accurate length means for the former three functional types. The statistics can be checked in the Appendix in spite of the mentioned limitation.

The same procedure was used for answering the fourth research question “What is the epistemic category of questions that can prompt students to produce more extended language output in EFL?”. The mean length of students’ responses was 5.10 words for referential questions, and 3.43 words for the evaluative category. The table below illustrates the frequencies of occurrence that belong to the two questions accompanied by their output, mean ratios, and percentages:

Table 2. Referential and evaluative questions’ frequencies of occurrence, language output, mean length of responses, and percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Class C</th>
<th>Class D</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Pct (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referential questions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>23.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language output</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>495</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative questions</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>76.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language output</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>1108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* Percentages (%) in table 3 represent the relative proportions of referential and evaluative questions with respect to the epistemic type of questions only, rather than the whole proportion of questions reported in the database.

The fact that the number of evaluative questions was 3.33 times greater than referential questions is important since it implies that teachers depended strongly on posing questions to which they have already pre-empted the answers. More importantly, the findings showed that students’ responses tended to contain more extended output when referential questions were asked.

For testing the research hypotheses, a binomial test and an independent samples t-test were used. The results of binomial test showed that differences in the rounded distributions of referential (23%) and display questions (77%) were highly significant (p < .001), as they deviate significantly from the assumed test proportion of 0.50 (50%). Statistical results are illustrated in table 3.

Table 3. **Binomial test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Observed Prop.</th>
<th>Test Prop.</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 Referential</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>&lt;.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2 Evaluative</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .001

The reported significant difference between the distributions of the two epistemic categories reveals that teachers were highly biased toward asking more evaluative questions during classroom interaction. That is to say, most of teachers’ epistemic questions did not serve genuine communicative purposes, as the larger proportion of interrogatives were merely posed for the sake of assessing the students’ factual knowledge.

Descriptive results concerning the output generated subsequent to epistemic categories indicated that the mean language output pertaining to referential questions (M=5.10; SD= 7.53) was numerically greater than that of evaluative questions (M=3.43; SD= 4.99). Results are illustrated in the following table:

Table 4. **Descriptive statistics about referential and evaluative questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referential</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>7.534</td>
<td>.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>4.987</td>
<td>.278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high standard deviation belonging to the output resulting from referential questions suggests that responses falling into this category were relatively asymmetrical in terms of length, if compared with the lower standard deviation value of their evaluative counterparts.

An independent samples t-test was used to determine the significance of the numerical difference observed between the language output elicited by referential and evaluative questions. Since the assumption of normality was violated as shown by Levene’s test for equality of variances (F= 21.80, p < .001), a Welsh t-test was used instead. The findings revealed the existence of a
statistical difference between the two means of language output as indicated by the p-value < .05 and the confidence interval [t (122.30) = 2.06, p = .042, 95% CI = .062, 3.28]. The results are elaborated below:

Table 5. Independent samples test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>F 21.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>t 2.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Based on the statistical findings derived from the binomial test and the independent samples t-test, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is deemed more plausible. That is to say, there is a significant difference between the distributions of evaluative and referential questions and the length means of language output elicited by each category.

To determine the strength of results reported in table 5, the effect size was examined through the use of Cohen’s d. Results entail the existence of a small to moderate effect size [d = 0.295, 95% CI = .067, .522]. The next table displays the former findings:

Table 6. Cohen’s d independent samples effect size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Standardizer(^a)</th>
<th>Point Estimate</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohen's d</td>
<td>.295</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) The denominator used in estimating the effect size. Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.

For the sake of clarity, we will try to summarize the findings in relation to the research questions and postulated hypotheses. The study disclosed that most of students’ contributions following teachers’ questions (N=566) were not entrenched with extended oral production in EFL (3.74 words per question). The typological distribution of functional questions is ordered as follows: epistemic (N=420; 74.20%), echoic (N=111; 19.61%), social control (N=16; 2.83%), expressive (N=11; 194%), and verbosity questions (N=0; 0%). The categorical distribution of epistemic questions was found to represent a proportion of 76.90% (N=323) for evaluative questions and a proportion of 23.10% (N=97) for referential ones. The mean length of output elicited from the referential category (M=5.10) was greater than the mean corresponding to the evaluative category (M=3.43). The statistical significance of differences between the distributions (p <.001) and output length means (p = .042) of referential/display questions led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

Discussion

This study reveals that teachers in Algerian university classrooms use a variety of questioning techniques during EFL courses, and that most of students’ responses were not embedded with long utterances. The frequencies with which diverse types of questions were asked...
differed depending on their functional properties. The epistemic type of questions was the most frequently exploited type of questions due to the content-based nature of Algerian language curricula. Referential and evaluative categories of questions which constitute the epistemic type of questioning techniques were used asymmetrically during the observed sessions of classroom discourse. Evaluative questions were predominant in comparison to referential questions as the difference between frequency distributions was very significant (p< .001). Despite the low frequency of referential questions, they had a higher potential of encouraging students to generate more extended production in the target language. The mean length of responses following referential questions was 5.10, while display questions induced 3.43 words per question. The difference between these means was found to be statistically significant (p=.042). Though the study reveals that students’ answers in EFL lessons were generally brief in terms of output length, referential questions were more effective in extending students’ oral production. The attained results fall in line with the disclosures of other studies found in literature (e.g., Brock, 1986; Long & Sato, 1983; Wright, 2016) and the common perception of referential questions as being more conducive to language output (Dalton-puffer, 2007). It is also fundamental to note that the difference between the two means is deemed meaningful since a small to a moderate effect size was reported drawing on Cohen’s d (d= 0.295) (see Bakker, et al., 2019; Kotrlik, Williams & Jabor, 2011). Hence, it is not daring to say that referential questions in the context of Algerian EFL classrooms are associated with students’ extended oral production and tend to be superior to evaluative questions in this regard.

The echoic type of questions was the second type of questioning techniques to be exploited by teachers, since 19.61% of questions pertained to instances in which teachers used clarification requests and confirmation checks. This implies that there had been a significant amount of negotiation of meaning happening throughout teacher-student talks because requesting clarification and seeking confirmation are indicative moves of meaning negotiation (Long, 1996). Echoic questions can also give the students opportunities to revise their utterances and to self-correct in cases where the produced output is considered inappropriate or flawed by the teacher, since they can also function as implicit strategies for the provision of corrective feedback (Ellis, 2021; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). The relative proportion of echoic questions attests to the instances of negotiation of meaning or provision of implicit corrective feedback, which constitute two fundamental elements of pedagogical discourse that contribute to language learning (Gass, Behney & Plonsky, 2013).

The last two types of analyzed questioning techniques represent expressive and social control questions. Expressive questions composed merely 1.94% of the number of questions in the database. The results imply that teachers opted to discuss content without involving much of their attitudinal bias in lessons delivery. It may also indicate that teachers attempted to keep an objective point of view about the information being discussed during EFL courses. The functional type of social control questions, which subdivides into three main categories, composed 4.24% of the whole number of the questions in this study. It implies that teachers did not tend to exert their authority while conducting EFL courses, since social control questions are often asked for management or to maintain order (Ellis, 2012). Such a low frequency can show that the delivery of lessons was characterized by a continuity of discourse and a friendly atmosphere as teachers proceeded in discussing concepts and exchanging ideas without exerting an authoritative
questioning behavior or a considerable number of procedural questions for covering lessons’ units. Furthermore, the low frequency of verbosity questions may suggest that teachers were tactful in the orchestration of classroom interaction, and for this reason they did not resort to the adoption of questions that aim at releasing tension, avoiding embarrassment or skipping communication breakdowns (Kearsley, 1976).

Finally, it should be noted that the present study is not devoid of limitations. Despite the prominent number of functional questions that were coded, the findings are only based on the examination of four EFL classrooms at two universities. Therefore, the earlier results cannot be generalized to the whole context of EFL education in Algeria. Yet, the study paves the ground for other researchers who want to address the topic to conduct similar studies or replicate the used research procedures within the local context, which would eventually lead to more comprehensive results.

Conclusion
The main aim of this research paper is to explore the distribution of functional questions and the impact they have on the length of students’ oral production in Algerian EFL classrooms. The study concluded that teachers use a variety of questioning techniques during classroom interaction with asymmetrical frequencies of distribution. The major findings showed that evaluative questions were significantly more frequent than referential questions despite that the latter promoted lengthier language output. Thus, the results imply that teachers should solicit to decrease the amount of evaluative questions or at least maintain a balanced approach toward implementing the two questioning techniques. Language practitioners need to be informed about the potential primacy of referential questions in promoting lengthier language output in the local context. Eventually, further research needs to be carried out in Algeria about the impact of teachers’ questioning strategies on the length and complexity of oral production in order to obtain more comprehensive results with a higher level of research representativeness.

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References


An Examination of the Impact of Teachers’ Functional Questions

Gouider & Ameziane


**Appendix**

Distributions of echoic, epistemic, expressive, and social control questions along with the elicited language output, and mean length of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type/Class</th>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Class C</th>
<th>Class D</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Pct (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Echoic questions</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>19.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language output</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>453</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Epistemic questions</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>74.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language output</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Expressive questions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language output</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Social control</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language output</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1-Attentional questions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language output</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2-Verbosity questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language output</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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The Effects of the Flipped Classroom through Online Video Conferencing on EFL Learners’ Listening Skills

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Abstract
It is challenging for EFL teachers to hold in-person classes during a global pandemic. This circumstance discourages EFL students from participating and practising English in class, which affects their performance and test scores, particularly on listening tests. When combined with video conferencing, the flipped classroom has improved student achievement. The present study aimed to examine the effect of the flipped classroom through videoconference on the EFL undergraduate learners' listening skills and to explore their opinions toward this teaching model. Therefore, the study tried to answer the main questions on the effects and the learners' opinions toward this teaching model. This study involved 37 undergraduate learners from a state university in Bangkok who were administered a listening pre-test and post-test. In addition, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The findings suggested that the flipped classroom conducted through online video conference affects listening skills since the pre-test and post-test had statistically significant differences. This study also employed a questionnaire and semi-structured interview to collect data from the participants, and the results revealed that the participants held positive opinions toward this teaching model. This study recommends that EFL teachers employ this teaching model in their lessons. Additionally, teachers can develop the findings of this study in future research to help EFL students improve other English abilities apart from listening. Regardless of the global pandemic, which hinders classroom instruction, this idea of instruction can make teaching and learning management as effective as classroom instruction.

Keywords: Flipped classroom, listening skills, listening strategies, online learning, Thai EFL undergraduate learners, video conferencing

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Introduction

Everyone worldwide has been affected by the global pandemic (COVID-19). This has resulted in the closure of businesses, the closure of national and international borders, and people becoming more isolated. Education is also affected by these circumstances (Schleicher, 2020). Nearly all educational institutes were closed, thus learning and teaching were shifted from in-person to online (Costa, Kavouras, Cohen, & Huang, 2021). All areas and subjects were conducted online.

English was among those subjects taught in Thailand that was forced to move online. Although English has been taught in Thailand for many years, most Thai teachers teach English in Thai (Ulla, 2018), and the focus is on grammar which limits learners’ opportunities to listen and communicate, leading to low English performance (Chanaroke & Niemprapan, 2020). Listening skills were particularly problematic for learners in the researcher’s teaching context. These problems raised the researcher’s concerns about finding a better way to improve learners’ English. One of the most effective teaching methods is using flipped classrooms.

The flipped classroom combines a traditional classroom with digital technology. This is found to increase students’ vocabulary (Mundir et al., 2022), communicative competence (Li, He, Tao, & Liu (2022), writing (Khan & Zulfiquar, 2022), and listening skills (Khoiriyah, 2021). Although prior research has established the effectiveness of flipped classrooms in teaching English, few studies have focused on listening skills with Thai EFL learners.

Based on the researcher's teaching experience as an English teacher. It was found that Thai students have difficulties learning English in some areas, in particular listening skills. Therefore, the researcher searched for instructional strategies to improve learners' listening skills. Applying flipped classroom teaching methods to problem-solving was one of the effective methods. However, because of the COVID-19 outbreak, online classes have replaced classroom instruction. Consequently, the researcher has combined flipped classroom instruction with video conferences to enhance the listening skills of English learners. The flipped classroom usually involves face-to-face class meetings once students have mastered the material at their own pace. The global pandemic, however, makes it challenging to teach in a classroom at school or university. This study employed flipped classroom principles and technology to conduct face-to-face classes through video conferencing to examine the effects of the flipped classroom through video conference on the EFL undergraduate learners’ listening skills and to explore their opinions toward this teaching model. The findings would provide EFL teachers with pedagogical implications for combining flipped classrooms with video conferencing technologies, developing materials and learning activities appropriate for online and offline learning, and enhancing learners' English skills regardless of location. This study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of implementing the flipped classroom model through online video conferencing technology on Thai EFL undergraduate learners’ listening skills?
2. What are the learners’ opinions toward using the flipped classroom model on their listening skills through online videoconferencing technology?

This study will first introduce the theoretical concept of the flipped classroom, video conferencing, the necessity for developing listening skills and the relevant research. The methodology section
then briefly summarises the research design, participants, and instruments used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, this research involved sections on findings, discussion, and conclusion.

**Literature Review**

This section reviews literature related to the research topic, notably the flipped classroom teaching approach, flipped classroom through video conferencing technology, and listening skills. The section concludes with a discussion of related studies.

**Flipped Classroom**

A flipped classroom is also called an inverted or upside-down class in which the usual teaching and learning sequence is reversed. In the traditional classroom, teachers conduct the lesson by lecturing on topics or concepts while the students take notes and listen. After class, they are assigned homework to do on their own. They do not get immediate support and feedback from the teacher (Namaziandost & Çakmak, 2019).

The flipped classroom, on the other hand, uses online and offline technology, particularly video clips. The teachers use them to introduce new concepts to the learners before they meet in the classroom setting (Alfahid, 2017). Once in the classroom, the learners participate in class discussions by applying new content or information they have learned. Incorporating the flipped classroom in EFL classes achieved pedagogical benefits as determined by researchers. Some of these benefits included (1) providing more opportunities for discussion (Gerstein, 2011), (2) increasing active learning (Enomoto, 2015), (3) motivating learners in learning (Karimi & Hamzavi, 2017), and (4) increasing the degree of autonomous learning (Roux, 2014) because “the learners might use their free time on study more on topic, seek assistance other sources to improve their vocabulary” (Sheerah & Yadav, 2022).

While the advantages of the flipped classroom were identified, some disadvantages were also found. For instance, Hojnacki (2018), Holmes, Tracy, Painter, Oestrich, and Park (2015), and Misela (2016) highlighted the fact that the flipped classroom approach is technologically oriented; it can thus be problematic if the students do not have access to learning equipment or have technological knowledge as they may feel overwhelmed and uncomfortable. In their studies, students also claimed that this type of instruction was time-consuming because it required them to spend more time studying before a face-to-face lesson. In addition, the negative aspect of this teaching approach “included the excessive workload on learners, lack of learning preparedness, lengthy videos, and technical challenges” (Li & Li, 2022). Nevertheless, the flipped classroom is beneficial in English teaching when considering both its advantages and disadvantages.

**Flipped Classroom through Online Video Conference**

This research was developed out of the desire to employ the flipped classroom approach and video conferencing technologies to conduct face-to-face lessons during the global pandemic. This teaching model was developed from the Flipped Learning Network’s (FLN) four pillars of flipped learning (2014): flexible environment, learning culture, intentional content and professional educator. The in-class and individual assignments were designed using Bloom’s taxonomy as a teaching strategy. The Flipped Classroom through Online Video Conferencing (FC-
The OVC (Online Video Conferencing) teaching model has three stages: before, during, and after video online conferencing. In the first stage, learners must independently learn, acquire and retain new concepts or content, such as vocabulary or grammar rules. Then, students must apply and utilize the knowledge they have acquired and learned to complete in-class assignments. Lastly, they develop or extend a given task utilizing knowledge to support or comment on the work of others.

The flipped classroom model, which utilizes online video conferencing to perform face-to-face instruction, can serve as an alternative teaching concept for EFL teachers who wish to undertake face-to-face instruction without the disruption of institution closure. In addition, various online video conference applications can be used as a teaching platform, notably the Zoom application, which allows learners to participate actively in the classroom regardless of location. Constructing English classes through video conferencing is an efficient method that has a good impact on EFL classrooms (Alshraideh, 2021). The participants of Benmansour (2021) indicated that learning through video conferencing platforms, especially Zoom applications can motivate them in learning.

**Listening Skills**

Listening is a critical communication ability that enables a person to comprehend spoken language to receive and respond to a message. It is a necessary tool for a second language or foreign language (L2) learning, and it is a prerequisite for the ability to communicate (Barani, 2011, as cited in Metruk, 2018). In addition, EFL learners stated difficulty learning to listen to English due to “speaking rate, pronunciation, nervousness, a limited vocabulary, and a lack of background knowledge” (Alzamil, 2021). Listening should be mastered before other skills, yet it is overshadowed by other skills (Nunan, 2003). Listening sub-skills can be taught in many different ways, but most experts distinguish between bottom-up and top-down approaches.

Bottom-up listening refers to understanding the message using the incoming input as the basis of understanding. The comprehension of this process is viewed as decoding the sound from the minor meaningful units such as sound, words, clues, sentences, and texts until the meaning is derived as the last step in the process. The strategies that can be taught to the learners when they conduct bottom-up listening are listening for specific information, transition signal, and keywords (Moreno, 2015; Richard, 2008; Rost, 2011).

The other approach is the top-down listening process. Richards (2008) and Nunan (2001) suggest that in this process, listeners try to understand what they hear and then investigate the meaning in detail. The strategies that can assist the learner in understanding the listening text suggested by Wilson and Harmer (2017) are listening for the main idea, predicting, making inferences, and summarizing from what they hear. It is believed that if the learners are taught and trained on how to select appropriate strategies used in listening, they can improve their listening skills (Fathi, Derakhshan, & Torabi, 2020; Milliner & Dimoski, 2019).

**Needs of English Listening Skills Development**

Listening is an essential skill in daily conversations and language learning but becomes troublesome for EFL students because of factors such as lack of vocabulary, pronunciation knowledge, and unfamiliarity with various accents. Suwannasit (2018) indicated that listening
texts derived from real-world English usage make it difficult to discern the main idea or specifics due to the rapid pace of speaking, foreign terminology, and length of the listening text. Emerick (2018) suggested that learners with high listening ability can participate in class more actively than low-ability learners. However, when the learners fail to cope with academic listening materials, they will be demotivated, anxious, lack concentration, and finally acquire a lower listening performance level (Khoiriyah, 2021).

In the researcher’s teaching context, listening skills are a key concern for both learners and teachers. Many students have shown poor performance in listening tests compared to other skills. For these reasons, the present study focuses on improving the learners’ listening skills by employing the flipped classroom approach and video conference principles.

**Related Studies**

Numerous studies on the flipped classroom’s effectiveness in improving learners’ English proficiency have been undertaken, and the majority demonstrate the flipped classroom’s effects. One study conducted by Khoiriyah (2021) revealed that the flipped classroom could enhance learner listening because they achieved higher post-test than pre-test scores. Another study by Roth (2016) investigated the effectiveness and perspectives of flipped classrooms in improving English listening comprehension. It was found that listening comprehension scores improved after the flipped classroom experience, and students enjoyed using the flipped classroom to improve their listening comprehension.

In addition to the effects of the flipped classroom, the learners’ perceptions of the flipped classroom were investigated. According to research conducted by Bin-Hady and Hazaea’s (2021), there is a strong association between student achievement and attitudes. Moreover, Farrah and Qawasmeh (2018) and Pratiwi, Ubaedillah, Puspitasari, and Arifianto (2022) found that the flipped classroom teaching approach can increase student autonomy and self-direction. Furthermore, the participants found the flipped classroom fascinating, motivating, and engaging.

In Thailand, a study by Jehma (2016) conducted with Thai EFL students focused on speaking, writing, and grammar. It was revealed that the learners improved their English writing skills and were satisfied with the flipped learning strategy. However, little research has been done on listening with Thai EFL students using the flipped classroom model and online video conferencing. The present study employed the FC-OVC teaching model to bridge the gap and enhance the learners’ listening skills.

**Methods**

This present study used a mixed-method approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data because it facilitates data triangulation, resulting in more reliable and sufficient data. Dornyei (2007) defines a mixed-method study as combining qualitative and quantitative data collecting and analysis. This research is a quasi-experiment that employed the one-group pre-test and post-test design for the experiment group.
Participants
This study included 37 participants enrolled in an English Foundation Course in academic year 1/2020. This study's subjects were selected by using strategies of purposive sampling. The students that enrolled in the researcher's session were selected on purpose, and they have different levels of English listening ability. There were 21 female and 16 male learners who participated in this research. They were from the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, and two colleges of a stated university in Bangkok.

Research Instruments
Research data were gathered using quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative data were collected through pre-post-tests, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. To collect quantitative data, listening pre-and post-tests and an opinion questionnaire was designed specifically for this research.

Listening Tests
The listening tests were aligned with the course objectives and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The pre-and post-tests included 30 multiple-choice questions designed to assess learners' abilities to listen for the main idea, details, inferencing, and focused listening.

Opinion Questionnaire
The questionnaires used in this study are constructed based on were adapted from Thaichay (2015) and Roth (2016). The questionnaire aimed to explore the learners’ opinions. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was used to collect the background information from the learners. The second part was composed of 22 items that explored the learners’ opinions toward the FC-OVC model, and the last part was open-ended questions.

Semi-structured Interview
A semi-structured interview was used to gather in-depth information from the participant representative. The interview consisted of five questions designed to elicit the learners' opinions on the FC-OVC model, their preferred learning activity, the suitability of the FC-OVC model to their learning, the improvement of their English skills, and the continuation of this teaching model after COVID-19.

Research Procedures
Data were collected during the first semester of 2020, from August to December. Following the orientation session, the listening pre-test was administered. The post-test was conducted during the last week of the experiment. After the post-test, the questionnaire and semi-structured interview were addressed to investigate the learners’ opinions. Then the data were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The results are presented in the next section.

Results
The results of the study are presented in two aspects according to the research questions: the effects of the flipped classroom through video conferencing and the learners’ opinions towards the FC-OVC model.
The Effects of the Flipped Classroom through Video Conferencing (FC-OVC)

Table one presents the descriptive statistic of listening pre-test and post-test scores. The results revealed that the mean scores before implementing the FC-OVC were 16.54 (SD = 4.87), and the mean scores after were 21.68 (SD = 5.23). As a result, the average post-test score was more significant than the average pre-test score.

Table 1. Pre-test and post-test paired sample statistic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>16.54</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>21.68</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>.860</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Since the mean score of the post-test was higher than the mean score of the pre-test, this finding suggests that studying in a flipped classroom using video conferencing can enhance learners' listening abilities.

Table two shows the paired samples t-test analysis of pre-test and post-test. The difference between the mean score of the pre-test and post-test was 5.14. The significant value (2-tailed) was .000, indicating a statistically significant difference in listening pre-test and post-test at the .05 level.

Table 2. Paired-samples test on pre-test and post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test – Post-test</td>
<td>-5.135</td>
<td>4.417</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>-6.608</td>
<td>-3.662</td>
<td>-7.072</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

The finding indicates that there was a significant difference in the scores of the pre-test (M=16.54, SD=4.87) and post-test (M=26.68, SD=5.22) condition; t(36) = -7.072, p=0.000. These results suggested that learning through the FC-OVC teaching model can improve the learners’ listening skills.

The Learners’ Opinions towards the FC-OVC Model

A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used to collect the learners’ opinions on applying the FC-OVC teaching model. Twenty-two statements on the questionnaire examined their opinions, while open-ended questions were used to gather deeper information on the FC-OVC model.

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from the work of Roth (2016) and Thaichay (2015) and consisted of three sections. Table three presents the results from the first section of the questionnaire that investigated the effects of the FC-OVC on students’ learning before they met synchronously through video conferencing. The level of agreement among the participants was analyzed. The researcher used the following criteria to interpret the mean value of the questionnaire. The statement is classified as “very low” if its mean score is between (1.00-
1.49); “low” if its mean score is between (1.50-2.49); “moderate” if it has a mean score of between (2.50-3.49); “high” (3.50-4.49); and “very high” if the mean score of the statement is between (4.50-5.00).

Table 3. Learners’ opinions toward the FC-OCV before the video conference lesson (independent learning)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning through the FC-OVC model allows me to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. prepare before class.</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. take more responsibility for my learning.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. learn at my own pace.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. spend more time watching video clips before class, so I understand the lesson better.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. watch videos before class, increasing my confidence to participate in classroom activities.</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the independent learning stage, statement one had the highest mean score of 4.27 (SD=0.90), which indicated a high agreement that this teaching model allowed the learners to learn and prepare before they met in video conferencing class. While statement 5 received the lowest score of 4.19 (SD=0.81), it still achieved a high agreement in that most participants believed that learning before an online video conference helped them prepare for the online class. The overall mean score from Table three is 4.17 (SD=0.86), which shows a high agreement with the whole mean score, demonstrating that learning through the FC-OVC allowed them to spend more time on independent learning and preparing before online meetings, which can increase their confidence.

Table four provides the participants’ opinions on the video conference lessons (statements 6-17). This section focuses on how the FC-OVC promotes their learning and listening skills.

Table 4. Learners’ opinions toward the FC-OCV during the video conference lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning through the FC-OVC allows me to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. interact with my peers and teacher in class.</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. be a more active learner.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. apply what I have prepared at home to classroom activities.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. get academic support from peers and the teacher.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. promote my collaborative learning.</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. have a lower level of homework anxiety.</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. have more opportunities for hands-on learning.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. improve my listening skills.</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. be able to listen for the main idea.</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. be able to listen to specific information.</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the analysis, statement 13 received the highest mean score of 4.32 ($SD=0.58$) among participants, which maintained a high agreement level, indicating that learning through the flipped classroom model can improve listening skills such as listening for main ideas, listening for specific information and details. Even though inferring listening (statement 17) received the lowest mean score of 3.95, it still maintained a high level of agreement. This section received a high level of agreement, with a total mean score of 4.11 ($SD=0.98$). The total mean score indicated that the students could actively participate in class and receive support from the teacher and peers. In addition, most learners agree that their learners’ listening skills had improved.

The following section uses statements 18-22 to assess the learners’ opinions after learning through the FC-OVC model. Their opinions were analyzed and presented in Table five.

Table 5. The opinions after the implementation of the FC-OVC model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning through the FC-OVC model</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. can promote my autonomous learning.</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. is suitable for my learning style.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. increase my confidence in English listening.</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. interest me in improving my English listening skills.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. allow me to reflect on my learning</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement 18 achieved the highest means score at 4.24 ($SD=0.86$); this statement indicated a high level of agreement on promoting autonomous learning. Statement 20 received the lowest mean score (3.97, SD=0.65); although there was high agreement that confidence increased after learning through this teaching model. Furthermore, the total mean score of this section was 4.17 ($SD=0.79$). The total mean score indicated that learners held a high level of agreement with this session’s statements in that the FC-OVC model can increase learners’ learning ability and responsibility, which was a good fit for their learning style.

The semi-structured interview was another research instrument used to investigate learners’ opinions. Interviews were conducted with six participants selected from the three score groups (low, moderate, and high). The interview consisted of five questions, and the results are elaborated upon according to each interview question.

The first question, “What do you think about learning through the flipped classroom model?” was used to elicit learners’ perceptions of the FC-OVC. The answers from the participants showed both positive and negative opinions about the FC-OVC model. For the positive opinions, the participants explained that this teaching model was a novel learning method that allowed them
to take more responsibility for their learning. They also considered it to be a flexible model. One interviewee explained that,

   I believe it was a new learning method, and I was fully accountable for my studies. I studied each of the contents twice, once at home and again via video conference. It helped me comprehend each lesson completely.

Several interviewees suggested that the FC-OVC teaching model could help them develop autonomy. This teaching model’s main principles allowed learners to assume additional responsibility by completing an online assignment following the teacher-assigned video segments. According to one interviewee,

   I believe that learning with the flipped classroom model benefited me significantly. It enabled me to schedule study time before class. I may revise the lesson again after viewing the video and in the morning before the video lesson.

Negative opinions indicated that students spent more time learning and preparing before the video conference session, as one of the interviewees mentioned.

   “I believe learning through video took me longer than learning in a traditional classroom.”

Furthermore, the interaction between the teacher and peers was considered a source of anxiety among the students. Several respondents expressed concern about the lack of interaction between classmates and teachers prior to and during online video conferencing.

   At times, it may be lacking in interactions; for example, you may interrupt or be unable to answer directly to your classmates or instructor due to the necessity of turning the microphone on and off.

The second question focuses on the FC-OVC model activities used in individual and online learning. The learners were asked, “What activities, before and during video conferencing lessons, do you like the most? Why?” Live session activities mainly consisted of watching lecture video clips and completing follow-up exercises. One interviewee stated that,

   I enjoyed studying via lecture videos since I could replay them. Additionally, I was able to write notes while listening, ensuring that I did not miss any key points.

The interviewees also mentioned that the activities they enjoyed during online video conferencing were group discussion and group work through the Breakout Room function in the Zoom application, allowing them to work in small groups. One of them mentioned that,

   I like the discussion activities since they allowed me to interact with my classmates and teacher, and I like entering the Breakout Room since it allowed us to speak in small groups.
Question three was used to explore the learners’ opinions on “What English skills did you improve from learning English through the flipped classroom model through video conference? Why?” The results of the interviews revealed that the skills the interviewees identified as having the highest rate of improvement were listening, speaking, and writing skills, respectively. They explained that this teaching method required them to learn from video clips and extensive listening texts, so they had more time to watch and listen, which they believed helped them get used to the listening texts. As one interviewee stated,

Repeatedly listening to the teacher’s video, Ted Talk, films, and music helps me improve my listening abilities. When we were required to listen to in-class activities, I could use the listening strategies I had acquired at home for the live session lesson’s listening tasks.

Question four asked the learners, “Do you think the flipped classroom through video conferencing is suitable for your learning styles?” Some learners agreed that this teaching model suited their learning styles because it is flexible. They could access the lesson anywhere without worrying about learning in isolation because they could receive support from their teacher and peers while meeting through online video conferencing. Some of them indicated that,

I think that I can learn through the flipped classroom because I can learn anytime by myself, which means I can focus more on my studies. I can also get support from the teacher in the live session or the Google Classroom.

Finally, question five was used to explore their opinions by asking, “Should the flipped classroom model through video conferencing be promoted in this university? Why or why not? This question was to obtain the learners’ opinions on continuing the FC-OVC even in the aftermath of COVID-19. They suggested that it depends on the subject matter. Some subjects, such as practical workshops, could continue to be taught through the FC-OVC model. However, lecture-based subjects could continue online through video conferencing, making teaching and learning more accessible than in the past. One interviewee shared that,

It should be promoted and continued even though we’re back in the regular classroom because this kind of learning can provide opportunities to practice our computer skills and be more responsive in our study.

Discussion

By answering the first research questions regarding the effect of the flipped classroom through video conferencing on the listening skills of EFL learners, pre- and post-tests were conducted to investigate its effects. The findings revealed that the listening test scores of the learners improved after implementing online video conferencing. In addition, the mean score on the post-test was more significant than the pre-test. Results of this study support the previous study conducted by Roth (2016) using the flipped classroom to improve students’ English listening comprehension at Pannasastra University in Cambodia. His results showed that the learners achieved higher listening post-test than pre-test scores. Furthermore, this research’s effect of deploying flipped classrooms on listening skills is consistent with prior studies conducted by Khoiriyah (2021) that used flipped classroom methods to improve learners’ listening skills. Her
findings showed that the flipped classroom improved students’ English listening skills as there was a significant difference in their pre-test and post-test scores. Moreover, this research supported the conclusions of Alshraideh’s (2021) study that constructing EFL classrooms using video conferencing is an effective strategy that positively impacts learners' English improvement.

Move to the following research question: “What are the learners’ opinions toward using the flipped classroom model on their listening skills through online videoconferencing technology?” The opinion questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data on the learners, and semi-structured interview questions were used to gather in-depth information. The questionnaire results suggested that the learners had a favourable opinion of learning through video conferencing. The research results support Benmansour’s (2021) claim that learners enjoy video online conferencing applications, mainly Zoom since they excite the learners about learning.

The result from semi-structured interviews found that the learners believed they had improved their listening skills and preferred this teaching model. However, some learners voiced unfavorable opinions regarding technological problems, internet connections, and time which are congruent with those of Hojnacki (2018), Holmes et al. (2015), and Misela (2016). Nevertheless, learners suggested using the FC-OVC model in future research, especially in higher education, because it was adaptable and convenient. This result aligns with Bin-Hady and Hazaea’s (2021) research on Yemeni EFL students; the students who obtained high achievement test scores showed positive attitudes toward the flipped classroom.

Regarding autonomous learning, the participants of this study also agreed that this teaching model promoted their autonomous learning as found in questionnaire statement 18, which is consistent with Farrah and Qawasmeh’s (2018) research results. They discovered that the flipped classroom promotes student autonomy and self-direction. Additionally, participants found the flipped classroom exciting, motivational, and engaging.

In terms of convenience, motivation, and engagement, the FC-OVC allowed learners to access the lesson anywhere, so they did not have to travel to the classroom, and it was safer for them to social distance and learn from home during COVID-19. Moreover, the interview data analysis showed that learning through the FC-OVC increased their confidence. The learners learned new concepts, facts, vocabulary, and materials before attending an online meeting, so they were excited and motivated to join class activities. The participants of this study shared similar opinions with those of Pratiwi et al. (2022).

The effects of the flipped classroom on Thai EFL learners’ English abilities can be seen by Jehma (2016), that the learners improved their speaking, writing, and grammar, and the findings from the present study confirmed that Thai EFL learners’ listening skills also improved. However, only pre-and post-tests were employed to collect data in this study; therefore, the results may not give sufficient proof. Consequently, various research tools, such as progress tests and teacher observation, might be used for triangulation.
Pedagogical Implementation

Several research studies have demonstrated the benefit of the flipped approach on a variety of English abilities but less on listening. Therefore, the findings of this study support and confirm the results of prior research that flipped classrooms can also increase English listening skills. English teaching and learning will not always occur in a physical classroom. Most instructors and students are familiar with online learning, especially during COVID-19, and several studies have demonstrated the benefits of integrating online meeting applications in the classroom (Alshraideh (2021); Benmansour (2021). The FC-OVC can bring up the idea of putting technology into all levels of education, but significantly higher education. Therefore, the EFL teachers can conduct online classes through video conferences in the future regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

The flipped classroom instructional model has a significant impact on the English proficiency development of EFL learners across a variety of areas. However, little attention has been paid to enhancing their listening skills. This study investigated the flipped classroom's effects on learners' listening abilities. During a global pandemic, it is challenging to implement the flipped classroom method in a traditional classroom setting; instead, this study combines the flipped classroom method with online video conferencing. The findings revealed that the learners' listening tests had increased after the implementation of the FC-OVC teaching model. The average post-test score was more significant than the average pre-test score which indicated the learners had a better performance on the post-test than on the pre-test. Apart from the effects of the FC-OVC on the learners' listening skills, the learners' opinions toward learning this teaching model were included in this study. Most participants showed positive opinions regarding the flipped classroom through video conferencing. The learners indicated that accessing the video conferencing class benefits them in three aspects: convenience, motivation and autonomous learning. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, using technology to manage online teaching via video conference can make teaching and learn as effective as in-class instruction, especially for university students who are responsible for their studies. Therefore, it is anticipated that teaching and learning will be conducted more frequently via video conferences. In addition, implementing flipped classrooms through online video conferencing can significantly affect teaching and learning. Therefore, regardless of what ultimately hinders classroom instruction, this idea of instruction can make teaching and learning management as effective as classroom instruction.

Recommendation for Further Study

This study compared pre-test and post-test scores to investigate and analyze the flipped classroom’s effects through video conferencing. Future studies are recommended to include a progress test to investigate the learners’ advancement during the implementation to examine how the flipped classroom affects learners’ listening progress while applying listening strategies to tasks and in-class activities. A delayed post-test is another test that can also be used to measure the learners’ retention after the experiment. Additionally, this study used a single-group pre-test/post-test design. As there was only one experimental group, further research is recommended to employ a true-experimental design that includes both experimental and control group learning and compares the effects on their listening through traditional flipped classrooms and flipped classrooms through online video.
According to this study’s findings, the opinions presented are those of the learners alone. Future studies can address teachers’ perspectives on flipped classrooms through video conferencing and traditional flipping. Instead of focusing solely on listening skills, it would be advantageous for learners if the teacher used the flipped classroom through video conferencing and studied its effects on other English skills, such as speaking, reading, writing, communication, and other subjects.

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The Effect of the Length of L2 Education and L2 Exposure on Apologies Produced by Saudi Females

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Abstract
This study investigates the effect of the length of language education and Language exposure on English apologies as produced by female Saudi learners. Second language research studies stress that learning a second language from a younger age often results in a higher level of language proficiency. Nevertheless, factors such as language exposure outside of the classroom setting can have a significant effect on the learners’ fluency and competence. This paper investigates the relationship between these two concepts, focusing on the speech act of apology. The current study will attempt to answer the following research question: In terms of L2 apologies, which factor seems to help the learners achieve better and more accurate results: longer periods of formal EFL classroom education or longer periods of EFL exposure outside of the classroom? In this research, forty-eight Saudi female participants responded to an online questionnaire which was the main data collection method in this study, along with interviews. The respondents were divided into four groups: group one was introduced to English at age three; group two learned English at age six; group three learned English at age twelve, and group four started learning English at the university level. It seems fitting to suggest that the respective four groups systematically represent the following linguistic proficiency levels (advanced, upper-intermediate, lower-intermediate, and beginner). The results concluded that there was a positive correlation between the years of language education and the application of apologies, in that the earlier a participant started learning English as a second language, the more appropriate her apologies were linguistically and pragmatically. However, a few exceptional cases were found where group one used apologies at the beginner level. Alternatively, group four displayed advanced competencies in employing apologies, despite their shorter years of formal English classroom education.

Keywords: Apology, Saudi females, second language education, second language exposure, speech acts

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Introduction

Most researchers use the terms learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and second language (L2) exposure interchangeably. Formal learning of EFL usually begins and stays in an EFL classroom at school or any other educational setting. Exposure to EFL, however, happens whenever there is contact with the targeted language in the outside world through the media, books, newspapers, T.V shows, magazines, radios, etc. Many studies have been made in this field, but nearly all of them have focused on students’ knowledge of L2 gained inside schools and classroom settings, not through natural exposure to L2. Therefore, given the lack of studies made on the possible effects of L2 exposure, this paper aims to examine the effects of general L2 exposure vs. classroom language education by comparing different groups of students with different types and amounts of L2 competencies. The main difference between the groups is the age at which they formally began learning English. Through background questionnaires and post-survey interviews, learners provided further information about the time and extent to which they were exposed to EFL. According to their answers, levels of EFL exposure and EFL learning did not always coincide. For example, a learner who started learning English at school at the age of six did not have high exposure to English outside of the classroom. Alternatively, a learner who began learning English from the age of twelve previously had a large amount of L2 exposure through exhibiting a real passion for the target language, watching T.V. shows in English, reading books in English, and so on.

In any experimental research where different elements or groups are being evaluated, there must always be a controlling factor with which the groups are being compared. The reason apologies were chosen as the main variable in this study is because they, as other speech acts (Austin, 1962), are great indicators of how well learners can produce and/or understand the intended meaning being communicated in L2. Since Speech Act Theory has gained worldwide popularity after Searle (1969) devised a system of speech act categorisation, many linguists studied speech acts to better understand human communication. In the context of second language learning, it is often difficult for learners to produce speech acts using correct language (linguistic competence) and in an appropriate manner (pragmatic competence) in the language being learned. Therefore, analysis of speech acts collected from learners’ data can provide substantial cues on the learners’ linguistic and pragmatic abilities in communicating certain acts with native speakers.

Along with requests, apologies have been one of the most studied speech acts since the theory’s birth. Ogiermann (2009) imputes the popularity of apologies in pragmatics research to their vital social function of restoring and maintaining harmony in societies. The choice of apologies in this paper primarily stems from apologies being an integral part of politeness in many speech communities. Moreover, failure in performing apologies according to correct social standards may lead to cross-cultural miscommunications with native speakers and an abrupt breach.
of smooth social interaction between interlocutors. To this end, the current study will attempt to answer the following research question:

- In terms of L2 apologies, which factor seems to help the learners achieve better and more accurate results: longer periods of formal EFL classroom education or longer periods of EFL exposure outside of the classroom?

This paper will start with the literature review and methods sections, ending with presenting the data results and analysing them.

**Literature Review**

The CCSARP project inspired a global influx of research on speech acts, in particular requests and apologies. In the case of apology studies involving Arabic and Arab participants, investigations branched further into enquiries which primarily highlighted one or more of the following criteria:

2. Comparing apologies from two or more languages (cross-cultural): American and Jordanian by (Bataineh and Bataineh, 2008), American and Egyptian by (Soliman, 2003), British and Saudi by Qari (2019), and Saudi and Australian by Al-Ali (2012)
4. Comparing respondents’ apologies in their first language (L1) and their second language (L2) usually to study the elements which are transferred from L1 to L2 (pragmatic transfer): (Ahmed, 2017; Alzumor, 2011; Ghawi, 1993; Rizk, 1997; Qari, 2017)
5. And eliciting differences in data by controlling social variables such as gender and power (Humeid, 2013; Alabadla and Ahmed, 2021; Alasqah, 2021; Al-Hudhaif, 2000; Alsallal and Ahmed, 2020; Alghamdi, 2013; Alhojailan, 2019; Goni, 2017; Harb, 2015).

In the following section, the findings of some of the studies mentioned above will be stated, as well as other studies which are closer to the research’s line of investigation, exploring different angles and still filling an important gap in this particular field.

Humeid (2013) designed a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) questionnaire and distributed it to a group of Iraqi EFL learners and American English native speakers. The results indicated that the native speakers employed a longer and wider variety of apology linguistic realisations.
(including colloquial terms) than the EFL learners. In terms of pragmatic use, it was found that the Iraqis employed a higher number of apology strategies with hearers of higher status, whereas the Americans used more strategies with people of lower rank and equal status. Humeid refers to the transfer of Iraqi social and cultural norms to the apology productions in L2. He states that in the Arabic culture, status and power play an essential role in the way societies behave and interact, especially in offences and face-threatening situations. Similar results were obtained from Binasfour’s study (2014) which compared apologies provided by Americans and Saudi EFL learners. The findings indicated that like Humeid’s data results, Brown and Levinson’s social power had a noticeable impact on the learners’ choice of apology strategies. It was shown that the higher power the offended party held, the more apology strategies the learners tended to employ.

More recently, Moussa Farraj’s (2022) research resulted in similar findings. She investigated apologies made by female faculty members at King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Her main aim was to find out whether there was a relationship between the faculty’s years of experience and the apology strategies they used. The findings of the study showed that social power, which is derived from having more or fewer years of experience, affected apology strategies used among Saudi female faculty members. The more youthful faculty members tended to use syntactically longer sentences in apologies compared to their older colleagues to show more respect. The researcher sees the findings as an important reflection of the Hejazi culture located in the Western Region of Saudi Arabia, as well as the Arabic culture in general which usually places higher status on people in power.

Another theme that emerged was the Arabs’ extensive use of verbal and non-verbal positive politeness apology strategies. This was recorded in some Arabic studies. For example, Nureddeen (2008) pointed out that in her apology investigation of Sudanese Arabic, some Arab respondents opted out of linguistic apologies, avoided blaming themselves, and resorted to humour and brushing off the incident as a funny unintentional encounter. She explains that in this case, the S is attempting to save her positive face, which in Arabic and other positive politeness cultures seems far more important than Brown and Levinson's negative face.

In addition, Rizk (1997) reported that the Arab participants employed the same theme above. In his study, some of the Arabs evaded apologising verbally by offering food to the H instead.Offering food in Arabic cultures is an act of generosity and action that enhances friendliness and solidarity between the interlocutors. In Jebahi's (2011) and Al-Ali's (2012) investigations, the Arab participants used religious terms to swear their good intentions to the H. The use of religious terms stresses the S’s intrinsic good nature. The Arabs also used sarcasm to calm the H down and referred to the H with affectionate names in an attempt to remind the H of the close social relationship between the interlocutors.
Moving on to EFL apology research studies which compared learners from different levels of proficiencies, quite recently, Al-Harbi and Mahfoodh (2021) examined the effects of English language proficiency on Jordanian EFL students’ apology strategies. Their sample included 270 Jordanian EFL learners divided into three groups: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. The researchers found a positive correlation between the students’ L2 proficiency levels and their apology strategy selections in that the more advanced the student was, the more often he or she would give coherent and appropriate L2 apology responses. Advanced learners also produced two expressions of apology and two intensifiers more than the other two groups, and in general, seemed more able to comprehend the various pragmatic functions associated with different apology strategies.

Similarly, Aboud and Shibliyev (2021) found a positive correlation between producing L2 apologies and the Arab participants’ proficiency levels. For example, advanced students used more linguistically complex apology realisations than the intermediate-level group. Also, when giving reasons to the H, the advanced learners were more able to clearly explain the causes for their misconduct than the other less advanced ones. However, when comparing the groups’ percentages of apology strategy selections, the relationship was not statistically significant which suggests that in terms of frequency of strategy use, the groups were quite similar in their choices. Additionally, no first language influence was detected in the Arab students’ L2 apology productions.

In her cross-sectional apology study, El-Dakhs’ (2018) confirmed that the lower and higher-level learners chose similar strategies across the apology situations; the most commonly used being IFIDs, offers of repair, and explanations. The rest of the strategies were used by less than 5% of both groups. However, when combining apology strategies, the higher level learners used 195 sequences of apology strategy patterns, whereas the lower level group employed 96 apology combinations. In this study, the influence of Arabic as a first language was also investigated. It was concluded that there was a much greater difference between native speakers of Arabic and EFL learners than between the latter and native speakers of English. This seems to suggest that in terms of apologies, the learners mirrored apologetic behaviour closer to native speakers of English than native speakers of Arabic. The researcher further stressed that, in some instances, the EFL learners portrayed apologetic behaviour as different from both groups of native speakers which El-Dakhs imputes to the uniqueness of interlanguage (Selinker 1972) being a whole “system in its own right” (Selinker, 2014, p. 230).

In conclusion, the above literature review of Arabic apology studies has added a huge value to the body of research concerning speech acts, cross-cultural pragmatics, and politeness research. However, these studies have not properly addressed the issue of the length of formal language learning vs. exposure to L2, and the effect they can have on Saudi EFL learners’ apologies in English. Carrying out a thorough search of relevant literature yielded no exact match of Arabic
studies which previously explored this paper’s main focus; namely, to study the effects of different lengths of L2 learning and L2 exposures on Saudi EFL learners’ apology strategy selections. Contrasting apology strategies used by two samples of Arab EFL learners and native speakers of English, as done by most researchers, does not give specific results about the apology strategy preferences for EFL learners from different levels of exposure to L2. Furthermore, the sample of Saudi female learners is generally underrepresented in speech act and interlanguage research (Almghams, 2020). According to the researcher’s knowledge, this group was never investigated in terms of apology behaviours vis-à-vis different lengths of exposure to L2. Thus, to fill in this literature gap, this study identifies a new point of investigation which will hopefully add to the existing corpus about the relationship between different lengths of L2 learning and L2 exposures and their effect on EFL learners’ apologies; in this case, Saudi female learners.

The Speech Act of Apology

Apologies have been defined as “reactions to offences, such as violation[s] of social norms or failure to fulfil personal expectations “ (Fraser, 1981, p. 259). They have been also regarded as post-event highly-conventionalised speech acts that tend to be aggregated (Leech, 1980). Contrary to Brown and Levinson’s framework (1987) which establishes a strong connection between politeness and indirectness, in the case of apologies, the more direct a strategy is, the more polite it is usually considered to be. For example, as opposed to the bare performative of the request speech act ([I] ask, [I] request), the performative of an apology ([I] apologise) appears to satisfy the politeness level needed to achieve a sincere apology. The reason for this contradiction can be explained with reference to the nature of apologies in comparison with other speech acts such as requests and complaints. Not only is performing an apology beneficial for the hearer (H), it is often expected from the speaker (S) after an offence has occurred. During an offence, the S damages the H’s negative face or positive face or both; hence, the apology which follows acts as an attempt from the S to restore the social imbalance between her and the H caused by her wrongdoing.

The linguistic realisations associated with making an apology can be classified as positive politeness or negative politeness strategies. Positive politeness apology strategies tend to be aimed at maintaining a close amicable relationship with the H in the future (e.g. showing concern for the H, providing reasons for the offence, explaining the S’s good intentions, offering to repair or replace what has been forgotten or misplaced, using informal address terms, endearment names, as well as first names). These strategies also focus on strengthening in-group solidarity and often indicate a low level of distance between the interlocutors. Negative politeness apology strategies, on the other hand, tend to convey respect towards the H and the H’s right to privacy and non-distraction (e.g. use of IFIDs, use of formal or deferential address terms, and avoidance of using personal pronouns such as “I” or “we”).
Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) divided apologies into five strategies, based on data collected from one of the first and most comprehensive speech act research projects of all time: “the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project” (the CCSARP). These strategies are IFIDs [sorry, excuse me, I apologize, forgive me, I regret, pardon me] taking on responsibility [self-deficiency, self-blame, denial of fault], explanation [explicit/implicit], an offer of repair [specified/unspecified], and promise of forbearance [e.g. this won’t happen again]. (pp. 207-208).

In this study, apologies collected from the data will be classified according to the CCSARP coding manual.

**Methods**

**Participants**

In this study, forty-eight Saudi female EFL learners responded to a written DCT questionnaire, which was distributed online and was the main data collection method, along with post-survey interviews. The researcher also collected demographic data from the respondents where background information such as age, education, and length of exposure to English as a second language was obtained. The participants were between twenty-five and forty years old and were all at the university level or higher. Accumulatively, none of the participants spent more than three months at a time in an English-speaking country.

Based on the collected background information data, the respondents were divided into four groups: twelve participants represented group one (G1) which was introduced to English at the age of three; twelve participants represented group two (G2) which started learning English at the age of six (they attended Saudi private schools); twelve represented group three (G3) learning English at the age of twelve (they attended Saudi public schools); and in the final group, group four (G4), a further twelve participants only started learning English formally at university level (they had previously attended Islamic schools where English classes were not offered on campus). Based on their years of formal EFL education, the four groups represented the following linguistic proficiency levels (advanced, upper-intermediate, lower-intermediate, and beginner) respectively.

The minimum age of the participants being twenty-five may indicate that in this study, the learners represent a small sample of a Saudi generation who were learning English through the internet, especially as young children, which was often inaccessible. Although internet services officially started in Saudi Arabia in 1997, the wide use of the internet in every Saudi household only began in the early 2000s. Before that, individual EFL learners exerted every effort to learn English by purchasing books and dictionaries, and later personal computer CDs. Moreover, TV shows at that time were mostly shown in Arabic as opposed to the current situation where you have the choice of language in which to watch a cartoon show, live on the same channel.
Research Instruments

In this study, data were collected by distributing online DCT questionnaires. The test was composed of eight scenarios in which respondents had to provide apologies for different offences. In the case of interlanguage research, DCTs are considered a valuable data collection method as it is viewed as a language test which examines the students’ differences in performing certain speech acts. Ogiermann (2018) points out that the “DCT is the only available data collection instrument that generates sufficiently large corpora of comparable, systematically varied speech act data” (p. 229).

The DCT in this study was influenced by Ogiermann’s (2009) cross-cultural apology study design. Ogiermann created her DCT taking into consideration Brown and Levinson’s three social variables (power P, distance D, and ranking of imposition R). The apology situations that were chosen included alternating variable combinations (e.g. (+P, -D, +R), (+P, +D, +R), (-P, +D, -R), (-P, -D, +R), etc.). Moreover, regarding her situation, Ogiermann picked diverse types of offences; some being legal in nature (getting on a train without a ticket), others derived from everyday life (leaving a mess on your friend’s table while at their house) and academic life (misplacing your professor’s thesis) (p. 84). In addition, she managed to implement apology situations which could potentially offend the H’s positive face (e.g. forgetting to return a friend’s books) and the H’s negative face (e.g. mistaking a stranger for a close friend). Below are the eight adopted offensive situations included in this research:

1- Your friend asked you to look after some fish and some of them died in your care.
2- Your friend asked you to return the books you borrowed and you forgot.
3- You hit someone in their back thinking it was your friend (identity mistake).
4- You opened a heavy door and let go and it hit the person behind you.
5- You had borrowed your professor’s thesis and you misplaced it.
6- You are studying at your friend’s house and you discover that your pen has been leaking on their table.
7- You walk out of a shop with an unpaid item and you get stopped.
8- You go on a train without a ticket and you get caught.

Findings

According to Tables one and nine (see Appendix section below), the main apology strategies used by the four groups in situation 1 were IFIDs (46), stating a fact (41), admitting responsibility (11), and explanation (10). In terms of the numbers of strategies employed by each group, G1 and G2 employed an equal number of strategies (30), followed by G4 (27), and then G3 (25). Therefore, in terms of the number of strategies used, the group with higher numbers of L2 education seemed to use slightly more strategies than the groups with fewer years of L2 learning. In regards to exclusive strategies, the strategies denying responsibility and offering repair were
only used by G2, while the strategy admitting responsibility was used by all the groups except for G3.

The groups also offered apologies which consisted of combinations of strategies such as (explanation + offer of repair) “e.g. This happened against my well [sic], I will buy you new ones if you would like.” However, the number one strategy combination used by all four groups was the IFID plus statements of facts (e.g. “I’m very sorry but your fish died”, “some of your fish died... sorry”, “so sorry but your fish has died”). This apology combo was largely used by all four groups. The reason may have stemmed from the decision to classify responses such as “your fish died” as stating a fact rather than admitting responsibility or explanation, which might also explain the variance in the number of uses of the strategies stating a fact (41) vs. admitting responsibility (11) and explanation (10). This type of classification was inspired by Ogiermann (2009) who classified apology strategies in which the offence is portrayed neutrally as merely mentioning or admitting a fact. According to her, “admissions of facts occupy a middle position on the responsibility scale; they neither reduce nor accept it” (p. 141). Based on this line of analysis, the strategy “your fish died” appeared to be suitably classified under this category since it includes no reference to the S’s involvement in the offence. This strategy is widely used in situations where the S has to inform the H about what happened. Furthermore, this strategy usually accompanies IFIDs, as was the case in the data at hand. By responding in this way, it seems that the S believes the IFID alone is sufficient to show her regret to the H since the other strategy is merely a declaration of what had occurred. Nevertheless, the use of the conjunction “but” in this case acts as a “preparer” since but triggers an implicature that what follows runs contrary to expectation. Hence, it intends to give headway to the H of what is yet to come and makes the S appear less offensive.

According to Tables two and nine, the most frequently used apology strategies in situation 2 were IFIDs and explanation (both 44), then offers of repair (17). A typical response from the groups for this situation was as follows: “I’m sorry, I forgot your books, I’ll bring them tomorrow”. Collectively, G3 employed the highest number of strategies (29), followed by G2 (28), then by G1 (27), and finally G4 (24).

Regarding exclusivity, the strategy promise of forbearance was only used by G3, and the strategy stating a fact was used by all groups except G3. It was further noticed that in this situation the strategy responsibility was not used by any group.

On closer inspection of the groups’ differences, it appears that the appropriacy level of the L2 apologies did not always correspond with the groups’ years of L2 education. In clearer terms, sometimes, responses from groups three or four were more grammatically correct and pragmatically appropriate than responses offered by candidates from the other groups with longer periods of EFL education.
As an example, a candidate from G1 gave the following response for this situation “*your books my house. come later*”. When interviewing this candidate later, she explained that she meant that her friend’s books are still in her house, and she is asking her friend to come later to her house to collect them. When asked if she thought she should be the one returning the books since she was the one who borrowed them in the first place, she said: “she is my friend, she must understand”. This was an indication of two things. First, the candidate may have been influenced by the collective nature of her L1 culture, where the boundaries between friends are different from the culture of L2. Second, the high number of L2 formal education did not seem to give her full advantage since her response was linguistically incorrect and culturally inappropriate.

On the other hand, a few candidates from G3 and G4 showed advanced levels of L2 linguistic and pragmatic competencies. For example, when a candidate from G3 was asked why she chose to use the strategy *promise of forbearance* in her response, she replied that “*I want to make sure that I have a good relationship with my friend so she can trust me in the future*”. She further added, “*I will only say that if I care about this friend and care for her friendship*”. Although starting her EFL classroom education only from the age of 12, this candidate exhibited an advanced level of L2 apology behaviour, both pragmatically and linguistically. The candidate later declared that before her formal EFL school education, she was keen on learning English by herself and spent a long time reading books, listening to songs, and self-teaching herself about English, from both perspectives of language and culture.

Based on Table three, the most frequently used apology strategies in situation three were *IFIDs* (45) and *explanation* (41). The strategy *showing concern for the H* was used by G3 and G4 only, whereas the strategy *compliment* was only used by G2. The last two strategies are new to the data; the former was used in this situation and situation four, whilst the latter was used here and in apology situation seven.

In this situation and situation four, both Hs are strangers. In the first case, the S hits someone on the back thinking they were a close friend, and in the second, the S opens a heavy door and lets go which causes it to hit the H who was just behind. In these two scenarios, there is a suspicion of physical harm or injury being inflicted on the H, thus showing concern for the H’s health is expected. According to some linguists, this strategy is considered sufficient to stand as an apology strategy on its own (Trosborg, 1995), while in other coding schemes, it is viewed as a type of intensification that is external to the IFID head act (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984). In my data, instances of the strategy *showing concern for the H* were used separately without the employment of any other strategies. Moreover, the strategy alone seemed capable of showing the S’s true care for the H’s health and wellbeing.
Another observation which emerged from the data analysis was that exclamations or emotional hedges such as (Oh!, Oh no! Oops! and OMG) were used quite frequently. Exclamations, given the appropriate contextual circumstances, can sometimes serve as an apology strategy on their own (Fraser, 1981). These hedges often have a function of expressing “surprise,” which might explain why they are frequently used in scenarios with an unexpected outcome such as the current situation. Although hedges were used in a pragmatically appropriate manner, linguistically, there were a few misspellings, especially coming from G2 respondents, such as (Oobs, Oof, and OObsi).

Exclamations were used equally by all four groups. The abbreviation (OMG) was even used by a few G4 learners. G4 learners, in particular, made zero errors in situation three. Table four illustrates the most frequently used apology strategies in situation four: IFIDs (43) explanation (29), and concern for the H (16). The strategy of shifting responsibility was used by G3 and G4 only, whereas the strategy of admitting responsibility was only employed by G2. What is worth mentioning is that G4 employed the largest number of strategies (25); followed by G2 (23), then by the two groups with the highest number of EFL education years: G1 and G3 (22).

Moreover, in this situation, all four groups employed various types of IFIDs, consisting of different parts of speech, e.g. “verbs” (apologize, excuse, forgive), “adjectives” (sorry) and “nouns” (pardon). The IFIDs in this situation were also heavily intensified: (e.g. sooooooo, totally, very, and many others). This is expected as in this offence, just like the previous situation, the S might have potentially hurt the H physically, which requires to show for extra concern and regret on the part of the S. Therefore, it is also unsurprising that the strategy of showing concern for the H was employed by all groups and was one of the most frequently used strategies in this offence. One note here is that although all four groups employed the strategy concern for the H, there were some grammatical errors made by the learners while constructing the apologies (e.g. Hops that you didn’t pain [sic] (G1), Did you hurt? [sic] (G2), Did you got hurt? [sic] (G3)). Nevertheless, the appropriateness in employing the strategy by all four groups demonstrates that even learners with fewer years of L2 education were able to realize the pragmatic necessity of demonstrating their true concern for the H’s wellbeing in this particular situation.

According to Table five, the most frequently used apology strategies in situation five were IFIDs (38), explanation (23), and offers of repair (13). G1 employed (23) strategies, followed by G2 (22), followed by G3 (20), and finally G4 (14) strategies. In this situation, although the S holds power over the H, the number of strategies used by the groups was not exceptionally high. What was often used as an adjunct, however, was addressing the H with the deferential term “Prof”. This points to a possible negative transfer from L1 rules. In the Arabic world, students never refer to their teachers by their first names; it is considered a severe breach of school protocol. The fact that even learners with longer years of L2 education and L2 exposures addressed their university
Moving on to Table six, which reports on data from apology situation six, G1 and G3 employed the same number of strategies (19), followed by G2 (17), and then by G4 (14). The most frequent apology strategies employed in this situation were *offers of repair* (33) and *IFIDs* (30). This is the first situation in which *IFIDs* were not the most frequently used apology strategy by the groups. This might be attributed to the nature of the offence in situation six. In this scenario, the S’s pen leaks on the H’s table, which typically requires “repair” from the S by cleaning the mess she has made. Offering regret alone might not be sufficient to save the S’s positive face; therefore, offering repair for the damage seems more suitable, which was appropriately used by all the groups. Likewise, in situation seven, the strategy *explanation* (31) was used more than *IFIDs* (27). Situation seven is a scenario where the S has committed a legal crime. Therefore, it only sounds appropriate for the S to describe the circumstances surrounding the offence and “explain” to the H the details of what caused the misconduct to happen.

Based on Table eight, which also refers to an unlawful act, the strategies *IFIDs* and *explanation* were employed similarly. The former was used 26 times, whereas the latter was employed 24 times by the groups. What was also noticeable in this situation was that G4 made zero errors, while other groups with more years of EFL education made a few mistakes, such as the following “I thought could buy whilst on train [sic] (G1)” and “I think the ticket when I ride [sic] (G3)”.

**Summary**

To sum up, the findings showed that G1 and G2 employed an equal number of strategies, followed by G4 and then G3. Therefore, in terms of the number of strategies used, the group with higher numbers of L2 education seemed to use slightly more strategies than the groups with fewer years of L2 learning. On the other hand, on closer inspection of the groups’ differences, it appears that the appropriacy level of the L2 apologies did not always correspond with the groups’ years of L2 education. In clearer terms, sometimes, responses from groups three or four were more grammatically correct and pragmatically appropriate than responses offered by candidates from the other groups with longer periods of EFL education. Therefore, the appropriateness in employing the strategy by all four groups demonstrates that even learners with fewer years of L2 education were able to realize the pragmatic necessity of demonstrating their true apology to the S in situations involving serious offences. In addition, there was a point of transfer from L1 where the respondents addressed the H with the address term “prof”. In the Arabic world, students never refer to their teachers by their first names; it is considered a severe breach of school protocol. The fact that even learners with longer years of L2 education and L2 exposures addressed their teachers with their job title (Prof.) stresses the depth in which L1 cultural norms can be rooted for most L2 learners, even at advanced levels.
university teachers with their job title (Prof.) stresses the depth in which L1 cultural norms can be rooted for most L2 learners, even at advanced levels.

Discussion

First, to answer the research question, based on the results of the data, it seems that long years of EFL classroom education and long exposure to EFL outside of the classroom both help the learners achieve accurate well-constructed apologies in L2. However, according to the study results, high exposure to L2 had a slight advantage in that learners from G3 and G4, who exerted real effort in their EFL learning journeys, demonstrated advanced L2 apologetic behaviour in comparison to the comparatively short periods in which they were formally taught English in a classroom. The opposite was manifested in the data as well; groups 1 and 2 did not always perform better just because they had long years of EFL education. This brings to attention the significance of the quality of the language environment that the student is surrounded with as much as their school or classroom education. If a learner is only exposed to classroom drills and dialogues, they might acquire substantial mastery of classroom skills but still struggle to communicate in a natural L2 environment. Therefore, longer periods of exposure to greater quantities of L2 input outside of the classroom may lead and assist to achieve a successful target language learning experience.

Based on the data results above, a few generalisations can be made. First, G1 (188) and G2 (182), having long years of formal EFL learning, tended to employ more strategies than G3 (171) and G4 (152), who had fewer years of EFL classroom education. However, there were a few exceptions to the rule such as in situations two and four. In situation two, G3 employed the largest number of strategies, and in situation four, G4 used the most strategies. Secondly, the results showed that all the groups had similar rankings for the use of strategies per situation (see Table nine), which means that in each situation, the most frequently used strategies were the highest employed apology strategies by all the groups. This may indicate that all four groups had the required level of pragmatic awareness which suggests the employment of certain apology strategies more than others, as necessitated by each situation. Thirdly, through analysis of the errors made by the learners, G3 and G4 did not make more errors than G1 and G2 just because they had fewer years of learning EFL in the classroom. In fact, in some cases, G4 committed no errors at all (e.g. situations three and eight). Upon interviewing G4 students later about how well they answered situations three and eight, most of them explained that although they have not learned English in a classroom setting before attending university (they attended Islamic only school which does not offer English classes to the students), they educated themselves out of the classroom by making serious effort to learn English. Most candidates agreed that English books from libraries and computer CDs were the largest resources they had in their journeys to learn English. One candidate said that she used to purchase English movie VHS tapes, listen carefully, pause now and then and try to assimilate the actors’ American accents.
Conclusion

This study was set out to investigate the relationship between L2 education and L2 exposure and the effect they can have on apologies, as produced by Saudi female EFL learners. In general, groups who have had long years of formal EFL learning employed more strategies than those who have had fewer years of EFL classroom education. Nevertheless, a few exceptions to the rule were found in some apology situations giving more weight to the factor of L2 exposure alone as an indicator of the learners’ competence in making apologies. Another observation was that all the groups employed similar strategies in the same apology situations. This might suggest that the groups similarly ranked each apology situation which resulted in equal use of strategies in certain situations. Moreover, groups which have had lesser years of formal L2 education but more exposure to L2 did not necessarily make errors more than groups with more years of L2 classroom instruction. This goes to show the significant impact exposure to EFL outside of the classroom can have on learners’ L2 development. This paper is hoped to shed light on the importance of L2 exposure as a strong factor contributing to L2 acquisition. Finally, the researcher recommends EFL learners be continually exposed to English through watching English movies and TV programs, surfing the internet, listening to the radio in English, reading English books, magazines, and newspapers, and practising the English language as much as possible to overcome their weaknesses and improve their L2 fluency and proficiency in general.

About the Author:

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References


## Appendices

### Appendix A

**Number of Strategies used in situation 1**

Table 1. *Situation 1 (Your Friend’s Fish Died in Your Care)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Linguistic examples from different groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs</td>
<td>I’m sorry for your loss (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 12</td>
<td>I apologize to you my friend (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 10</td>
<td>I’m so so sorry this happened (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 12</td>
<td>I’m very sorry your fish died (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 12</td>
<td>I’m ever so sorry (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitting responsibility</td>
<td>I didn’t take great care of your fish (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 3</td>
<td>I wasn’t able to take care of your fishes [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 4</td>
<td>I didn’t care for it (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 0</td>
<td>Some of your fish died because I did not pay attention to them (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 4</td>
<td>I couldn’t stop what Allah has decided for it. He Almighty took care of it (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting responsibility</td>
<td>I tried my best but the fishes [sic] don’t like me (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 1</td>
<td>I couldn’t stop what Allah has decided for it. He Almighty took care of it (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 1</td>
<td>I tried my best but the fishes [sic] don’t like me (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denying responsibility</td>
<td>I have bad news but it’s not my fault (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 1</td>
<td>I have bad news but it’s not my fault (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>I don’t know why, I fed them once a day just like you said (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 2</td>
<td>This happened against my well [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 3</td>
<td>I took care of them but they died fast (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 4</td>
<td>I took care of them but they died fast (G3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I don’t know what went wrong.. I took care of them as you told me (G3)

Offers of repair
G2: 2
What can I do to make it up to you? (G2)
I will buy you new ones if you would like (G2)

Stating a fact
I'm sorry but your fish has died (G1)
I'm sorry but one of the fish is dead (G2)
One of your fish is died [sic] (G3)
Some of the fish died (G3)
I tried my best but some fish have died (G4)

Appendix B
Number of Strategies used in situation 2

Table 2. Situation 2 (You Forgot to Return Your Friend’s Books)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Linguistic examples from different groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 10</td>
<td>I’m sorry (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 10</td>
<td>Forgive me (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 9</td>
<td>I’m really really sorry (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 10</td>
<td>Oh sorry (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 11</td>
<td>I forgot the/your books (G1), (G2), (G3), (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 12</td>
<td>I know I had to bring something but I forgot (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 11</td>
<td>I wrote a note but still forgot (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 10</td>
<td>I forgot to get your books with me [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Offers of repair
G1: 5
I’ll bring them next time (G1), (G4)
G2: 5
I will return soon [sic] (G1)
G3: 5
G4: 2
I’ll send them tomorrow (G3)

Stating a fact
G1: 1
Your books my house [sic] (G1)
G2: 1
Your books are with me (G2)
G3: 0
Your books are at my house (G4)
Appendix C

Number of Strategies used in situation 3

Table 3. Situation 3 (Mistaken Identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Linguistic examples from different groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs</td>
<td>I’m sorry (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 12</td>
<td>Am sorry [sic] (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 12</td>
<td>Please accept my apologies [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 11</td>
<td>Oh! So sorry (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>I thought you were someone else (G1), (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 11</td>
<td>You look the same as my friend [sic] (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 10</td>
<td>Oh No! I thought you are another person I know (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 9</td>
<td>Oh! I thought you were a friend of mine (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 11</td>
<td>Oh, I thought you were my friend (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for the hearer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 1</td>
<td>OMG, How are you? (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 1</td>
<td>I will smile and ask about her (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliment</td>
<td>Nice hair though! {G2}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D

Number of Strategies used in situation 4

Table 4. Situation 4 (The Heavy Door Hit Someone Behind You)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Linguistic examples from different groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs</td>
<td>I’m sooooo sorry (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 12</td>
<td>Please forgive me (G1), (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 11</td>
<td>I apologize for you [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 9</td>
<td>I’m totally, very, sorry (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 11</td>
<td>My apologies (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pardon (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitting responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 1</td>
<td>Its my mistake [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Effect of the Length of L2 Education and L2 Exposure on Apologies Produced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shifting responsibility</th>
<th>I don’t understand why it is so heavy (G3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1: 0</td>
<td>The door is a bit heavy (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 0</td>
<td>The door was too heavy (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>I didn’t know you were behind me (G1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1: 4</td>
<td>It was a silly accident (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 6</td>
<td>Just accidint [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 9</td>
<td>I didn’t mean that (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 10</td>
<td>I didn’t see you (G2), (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t know that you were behind me [sic] (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I did not know that some behind the door [sic] (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I didn’t mean to hurt you (G4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern for the hearer</th>
<th>Hops that you didn’t pain [sic] (G1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1: 6</td>
<td>Did you get hurt? (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 5</td>
<td>Are you okay? (G2), (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 2</td>
<td>Did you hurt? [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 3</td>
<td>Are you hurt? (G4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix E

Table 5. Situation 5 (You Lost Your Professor’s Thesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Linguistic examples from different groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1FIDs</td>
<td>Sorry for losing your thesis (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 12</td>
<td>Hi prof I really apologize (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 9</td>
<td>I apologize Mrs last name [sic] (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 9</td>
<td>Prof please accept my apologies (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 8</td>
<td>Please prof don’t be mad (G4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admitting responsibility</th>
<th>My mistake (G2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1: 0</td>
<td>I will tell the truth (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 2</td>
<td>I know I made a mistake (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 2</td>
<td>Sorry for my mistake (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>I misplaced your thesis (G1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1: 9</td>
<td>I misplaced [sic] (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 5</td>
<td>I might’ve lost your thesis(G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 5</td>
<td>I didn’t completed my homework [sic] (implying that she still needs the thesis) (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 4</td>
<td>I think I didn’t use it in its place [sic] (G3) (implying that she did not put it back where she should have)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I really needed you (G4) (implying that she needed the thesis urgently)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I forgot (G4)

Offers of repair
- I’ll look for it again this evening (G1)
- I will fix that immediately (G2)
- Prof. I will correct the mistake (G2)
- Please let me handle it and get for you [sic] (G3)
- I will keep on searching until I find it (G4)
- I will think again in order to remember where I kept it (G4)

Promise of forbearance
- It will not happen again (G3)

Appendix F
Number of Strategies used in situation 6
Table 6. Situation 6 (Your Pen Leaked on Your Friend’s Table)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Linguistic examples from different groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs</td>
<td>I’m so sorry for this mess (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 7</td>
<td>Ooopsi shit so sorry (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 6</td>
<td>I’m really very sorry (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 9</td>
<td>Ohhhh sorry (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>I had no idea the pen has been leaking (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 2</td>
<td>pen loose [sic] (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 1</td>
<td>I think my pen is broke [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers of repair</td>
<td>Can you hand me a wet cloth I want to wipe this quickly (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 9</td>
<td>I can clean (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 9</td>
<td>I’ll clean it right now/ I’ll wipe it (G1), (G2), (G3), (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 9</td>
<td>Can you please give me a napkin to clean up this mess? (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 6</td>
<td>Would you please bring me a towel to clean it up? (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May have some cleaning tools to clean your table? [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Let me clean it/that up (G1), (G2), (G3), (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating a fact</td>
<td>My pen leaked on your table (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 1</td>
<td>The pen is leaking (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 1</td>
<td>My pen has leaked on your table (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix G
Number of Strategies used in situation 7
Table 7. Situation 7 (You Left a Shop with an Unpaid Item)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Linguistic examples from different groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs</td>
<td>I’m sorry (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 7</td>
<td>Forgive me (G2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Effect of the Length of L2 Education and L2 Exposure on Apologies Produced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Linguistic examples from different groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admitting responsibility</td>
<td>My bad (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 5</td>
<td>My mistake (G1), (G2), (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 1</td>
<td>I did not pay attention (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 3</td>
<td>I need take some pill for forgetting [sic] (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting responsibility</td>
<td>The cashier should’ve checked the items before handing me the bag (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 3</td>
<td>The cashier must do her job well lol (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 1</td>
<td>It seems they forgot to take out the sensor (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 0</td>
<td>Maybe the cashier didn’t remove the barcode (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denying responsibility</td>
<td>I paid for it (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 0</td>
<td>Of course, I forgot to pay because I won’t steal (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>I thought I (had) paid (for this item) (G1), (G2), (G3), (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 12</td>
<td>I thought I don’t have it (G1) (implying that the S was not aware she had the item with her)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 5</td>
<td>I hurried up [sic] (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 7</td>
<td>I swear to God I didn’t realize this item was on me (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I didn’t realize I’m holding/carrying it (G2), (G3), (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I was looking for the cashier [sic] (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers of repair</td>
<td>I’ll go back and pay right now (G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1: 3</td>
<td>I’ll pay for it [right] now (G1), (G2), (G3), (G4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 1</td>
<td>I will get back to the cashier and place the payment (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: 1</td>
<td>I’ll return it straight away (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4: 1</td>
<td>I pay the money with good tips [sic] (G3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliment</td>
<td>Thank you for being alert (G2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2: 2</td>
<td>How impressive is that (G2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix H
Number of Strategies used in situation 8

Table 8. Situation 8 (You Got on a Train Without Purchasing a Ticket)
**Explanation**  
G1: 7  
G2: 8  
G3: 3  
G4: 6

- I thought could buy it whilst on the train [sic] (G1)
- I thought I could buy the tickets on board (G1)
- I thought I had my ticket with me (G1)
- I forgot where I kept my tickets (G2)
- It must have fallen out of my pocket (G2)
- I think I lost the ticket (G2)
- I swear I had it with me (G2)
- I think the ticket when I ride [sic] (G3) (implying that she thought she was able to buy the ticket on board the train)
- I didn’t have any money (G4)
- I might’ve lost it (G4)

**Offers of repair**  
G1: 5  
G2: 2  
G3: 3  
G4: 1

- Where can I pay? (G1)
- Is there any way [sic] to solve this situation without getting me off the train? (G2)
- Can you lead me to the nearest ticket office? (G2)
- Next time I’ll pay for a ticket (G3)
- How much should I pay? (G3)
- Is it okay if I pay for the ticket now? (G3)
- I will buy it now (G4)

**Promise of forbearance**  
G1: 0  
G2: 1  
G3: 1  
G4: 0

- It won’t happen again (G2)
- I promise I won’t do it again (G3)

---

**Appendix I**

**Number of Strategies used in all the situations**

Table 9. Number of strategies used in all the situations by the four groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies with the highest employment rate</th>
<th>Sit 1</th>
<th>Sit 2</th>
<th>Sit 3</th>
<th>Sit 4</th>
<th>Sit 5</th>
<th>Sit 6</th>
<th>Sit 7</th>
<th>Sit 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resp</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expl</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OOR</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall number of employed strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Neurolinguistic and Semiotic Film Structure Modelling as the Linguistic Student Engagement Technique

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Abstract
The research paper aims to improve the methodology platform and engage language students. The study’s main aim is to optimize the effectiveness of the learning process. Therefore, the authors of the article focused on solving the following tasks: 1) to revise the theoretical linguistic semiotics and lingua didactic approaches to understanding the notion of film/cinema; 2) to design the model of the neurolinguistic semiotics structure of a film; 3) to formulate the practical recommendations for applying the criterion of ecological impact to select authentic teaching video materials; 4) to experimentally prove their expediency. We utilize both general scientific research tools and unique experimental methods. We use observation, description, analysis, synthesis, generalization, and systemization, applied neurolinguistic programming (NLP), and lingua didactic techniques. We use the first group of strategies to formulate the theoretical basis of the work, logical arrangement of scientific facts, expression of conclusions, and qualification of actual material. With the help of the second group of methods, we design a model of the neurolinguistic semiotic structure of the film and experimentally verify its effectiveness in the teaching process. The main results: 1) the range of impact varieties is in the following way: weak degree – persuasion, moderate – suggestion, moderate and considerate – manipulation; 2) symbols are oriented to suggestive impact, copies – to suggestive and persuasion impact, indices – to the ability to actualize all impact varieties, including manipulations; 3) the use of publicist documentaries with persuasive and suggestive elements helps to increase student activity in the classroom. The significance of the work is that its results can be helpful to language teachers in the selecting of educational video materials for students.

Keywords: Copies, engagement technique, film text, impact, indices, lingua didactics, linguistic semiotics, neurolinguistic and semiotic model, publicist documentary, symbols

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Introduction

The educator profession requires constant change, development, creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical assessment, the main components of change being “innovation and critical reflection” (Pennington, 1995, p. 720). The awareness of a need to change and adapt constantly is the condition of context – interactive involvement. There are two reasons for this: today’s global events (e.g., spreading the information and the Internet technologies, highlighting the development of soft skills in higher education on the one side, or the COVID-19 pandemic covering the world on the other) and national events (e.g., hybrid information war here in Ukraine starting in 2014).

Expansion of information and communication technologies involving the unlimited application potentialities of interactive devices and gadgets (Reddy, 2008), on the one hand, and expressive psychological techniques, on the other, for optimizing language teaching, particularly in higher schools, has opened up new horizons for selecting more relevant teaching sources (Dale, 1969). In the seventies, Dale estimated that “learners will generally remember 10 percent of what they read, 20 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, 50 percent of what they hear and see” (p. 105). At the beginning of the 21st century, Lachs, Pisoni, and Kirk stated that “children tended to score higher on measures of audiovisual gain, especially video” (p. 238). Since then, we have witnessed the routine practice of considering integrated audio and visual authentic materials as the integral methodological component. It means using visual sources intended for native language speakers that integrate visual and acoustic content of linguistic and extralinguistic information about the various spheres of the social life of other language speakers (Shcheblykina, Pogorelov & Dragica, 2020). The experience of applying authentic video materials for teaching has enabled us to determine their efficiency. In addition, science already has algorithms for use, typical tasks, and exercises to introduce them into higher school teaching practice (see works Allan, Aris & Cakir). In their various formats, these materials can provide a wealth of linguistic and conceptual content to learners focused on specific applications of their linguistic skills. Methodologists and educational technologists have also developed the criteria for selecting authentic video materials for lectures and practical classes, emphasizing the fact of the necessity of their strict filtration: video duration, current validity of its content, relevant language complexity, variability, information value, genre expediency, coordination of acoustic and visual sequences and recording quality (Shcheblykina, Pogorelov & Dragica, 2020).

However, there is one criterion that remains negligible, which is the level of the ecological impact of authentic visual materials. The potential threat of a significant number of documentaries is characterized by high-quality technical performance but containing pathogenic texts, their semiotic structure containing the mechanisms of self-production and self-distribution (Potyatynyk, 1996). Therefore it turns out that it is necessary:

1) to simultaneously integrate the paradigms of linguistic semiotics, suggestive linguistics, and neurological linguistic programming, there being powerful impact phenomena for the research;

2) to model the film’s neurological and linguistic semiotic structure for further determining the recommendations: how to apply the ecological impact criterion while selecting authentic video materials.
Currently, studies are available that demonstrate the cognitive model of semiotic cinema language.

The article aims to develop the neurological, linguistic, and semiotic model (NLSM) based on analyzing the film structure, implying the selection criterion of ecological impact, particularly for training applied linguists.

Literature Review

The notion of film and cinema

The notion of ‘cinema’ is known to be polysemantic both in English and Ukrainian. Its definitions are synonymic and differ due to the parameter of generalization or concretization. In general, ‘cinema’ is a “universal synthetic art which unites the properties of other arts – literature, theatre, painting, music, photography” (Ratushnyak, 2012, p. 190). In its narrower meaning, it is the same as film. These definitions are standard for linguistic and didactic research (Ihebuzor, 2015; Dirkes, 1985). But semiotic study usually uses generally the notion of cinema text. It means “the product of a chain of nonuniform semiotic systems (oral and nonverbal) which are interconnected using specific cinema codes (foreshortening, a short, light, plan, plot, art space, editing, etc.)” (Vinnikova, 2010, p. 32).

Semiotic signs and language representatives

In this publication, we focus on the verbal organization of cinema discourse because concentrating on the visual components and disregarding the verbal ones result in ambiguous comprehension of cinema discourse (Kozloff, 2000).

We also refer to Ch. Pierce’s (2000) classification of signs (indices, copies/icons, symbols) (p. 104) because it seems its relevance for linguistic and semiotic studies of cinema discourse has already been proved (see works Woolen, 1976).

Language icons are the signs that demonstrate the liveliness between the form and the content, e.g., a portrait. The vivid examples of language icons/copies are: a) the lexemes presenting the semantic field of visual reception: He is observing, and what he sees troubles him (Orange Revolution: sharp corners of round tables); b) metaphors: We opened horizons and for the young people to travel, achieve, study at home and abroad, and today it is easier accessible (Ukraine: the evolution of dignity), The President defended his decision to abandon the talks (The USA today); c) repetitions, parallel constructions: We have so many friends, we have so many acquaintances, there are thousands of them (Year of Zelensky’s presidency); d) speech styling: Due to mentality, customs and traditions English sounds like English (The English National Character).

Indices demonstrate continuity (nearness in time or space). They are intonation, interjections, personal, adverbs, proper names, grammar indications, citations, intertextual references, and parenthesis. They emphasize the index nature of a particular speech component: Liverpool is once a vital port and the home of the Beatles (Window on Britain).

Symbols are language signs which refer to the signifying object, usually associations of general ideas to persuade us to interpret the symbol as a reference to the object (Pierce, 200). The language
symbols present the lexemes, which nominate the value hierarchy levels: *Nobody would believe that Philaret could create the new Ukrainian church, which would have the majority of followers. However, it has the only Bishop who has not betrayed him* (Tomos for Ukraine).

The top-priority sensitizers of impact effects as linguistic and semiotic elements of cinema discourse are expressed primarily by icons. They are in the right brain hemisphere. It is causing a more significant suggestive impact on a personal psychic sphere. It relates to reducing the level of critical evaluation of the text either at the stage of its reception or production (Petryk, 2020). The predicates, for example, lexemes expressing seeing, make it possible to mark and foreground these suggestive representatively. As Kovalevs’ka (2008) states, “the application of particular sensor-marked words is the personal characteristics of person’s representative system, the ability to determine them via verbal expression and using them in real communication can optimize and enhance the resulting communicative impact” (p. 202). Moreover, icons are the words and phrases which excite the neurological and linguistic process of omission, leading to the exclusion of some significant components of the deep structure from the surface representation. They are the words the reduced referential index, for example, *You start speaking with a person, you believe that the person came with a good project for the state, but some very many people are ‘rotating’ in politics, who are working for their own sake, only for their own sake* (Year of Zelensky’s presidency). Language icons are present by repetitions and metaphors, express persuasion or argumentation, and are used to influence the audience, especially in English cinema discourses. Thus Haydanka (2018) states that “the most frequently used words expressing arguments and disagreement are metaphors” (p. 94).

We also use language symbols to express suggestive impact. Their verbal representatives belong to the category of not specific nouns or their derivatives. In addition, “their specific semantics enables to express the vector variety of perceptive definitions” (Kovalevs’ka, 2008, p. 204). As a result, we have the neurological and linguistic process of omission: *People stopped feeling fright, they started feeling freedom* (Ukraine: the evolution of dignity), ‘

However, there are many cases when symbols can also generate neurological and linguistic processes of misinterpretation. They also “represent the hypothetical verbal models of the environment with the components without identified in their preliminary experience” (Kovalevs’ka, 2008, p. 205). They are in, for example, thought-reading contexts: *You know I believe that there will be a government for the people* (Year of Zelensky’s Presidency).

Indices are known to result in poly vector impact. Firstly, they generate the suggestive impact 1) by directives: *Put up the photos of your children and look into their eyes before making every decision* (Year of Zelensky’s Presidency) or 2) by indefinite pronouns which identify semantic diffusion. In this case, we have the omission process.

Secondly, they tend to implement manipulative impact, which results in compromising (practically in every case), retrieving the recipient’s attention (achieved by information), and modeling some particular opinion of a recipient. Primarily this impact-oriented information is revealed in the contexts which contain the names of countries and the names of cities and is semantically connected with these lexemes: *Never forget what the cost of Ukraine’s sovereignty*
was (Kruty 1918). In these cases, ‘the sensation of patriotism, pride, and love for your native land is manipulated’ (Kutuza, 2018, p. 112). However, explicit manipulation disappears due to appealing to the national identity of the addressee. Similar impact vectors characterize the contexts which contain numerical information.

Thirdly, indexes can also function as a kind of infection, having a psychological influence on the personality in communication and interaction. It conveys particular moods, imperatives via emotional but not via intellectual sphere (conscience, intellect) and a kind of imitation as the means of the adoption of the social traditions, as the mechanism of conscious and subconscious reproduction of actions of another person (the subject of psychological influence). It is about some intertextual references and citations that mainly appeal to well-known film best-sellers. It causes a priori positive or negative attitude to a new cinema product and persuade the addressee to watch it again.

Methods

The sources comprise the bank of 10 publicist documentaries of 8-hour duration in English and Ukrainian released within 2019–2020 and taken from YouTube video-hosting because with more than one million pages of information added every day the Internet is indispensable to any researcher, and instructor looking for specialized content. There are:

1) “Orange Revolution: Sharp Corners of Round Tables”
2) “Ukraine: The Evolution of Dignity”
3) “Year of Zelensky’s Presidency”
4) “Air Warriors”
5) “Tomos for Ukraine”
6) “Kruty 1918”
7) “The USA Today”
8) “The English National Character”
9) “Window on Britain”
10) “Walles”.

The factual material includes about 3500 linguistic, 5000 extralinguistic units, and 58 oral, and textual responses from the experiment respondents (students). In selecting the suitable materials, we considered at least three fundamental aspects of learners’ backgrounds: linguistic, abstract, and cultural-linguistic background helping the selection of tasks and their sequencing, conceptual or knowledge background determining the need for general or specific nature of information, cultural background affecting the efficient learner-teacher interaction.

The aim, tasks and complexity of the integrated research provided for the necessity of applying a number of general and special linguistic methods, the former being presented by the methods of observation, description, analysis, synthesis, generalization to highlight the logical nature of the research, systemization of the selected material, the qualificative way implying classification to distinguish linguistic semiotic signs in film text structure, modelling to understand how to design the NLS model of the film structure, the quantitative way to determine students’ activity during the experiment, and the latter being presented by the method of structural and semiotic analysis to determine the linguistic and semiotic status of the research object components, Milton-model identification method and the method of predicate technologies which are used in neurological and
linguistic programming, the practice of contextual and interpretations analysis to state the interdependence between the linguistic, and semiotic structural element and its impact potentialities. Moreover, we use the linguistic didactic methodology of experiment teaching.

Results

Model of the neurological and linguistic semiotic structure of the film

All the above enables to the design of the NLSM film. We believe this model can promote a deeper comprehension of the film’s impact on the audience.

There are already attempts at communicative impact modeling. Thus, Kovalevs’ka (2008) showed how to model empathy applying NLP methods.

While modeling the impact potentialities of linguistic and semiotic components of cinema discourse, we have based our research on the theory of brain interhemispheric by American neuropsychologist Sperry (1980). Scientist states that the hemispheres are responsible for various functions. Still, each can acquire knowledge (to learn) (Sperry, 1980). These ideas enable to construction of the network demonstrating the neurological, linguistic, and semiotic model of cinema discourse (See Table 1).

Table 1. Neurolinguistic semiotic model of film structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left hemisphere</th>
<th>Right hemisphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>Suggestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>Visual predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat</td>
<td>Stylization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indice sign</td>
<td>Numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Exclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Proper name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Quote Intertext</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Quote Intertext</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic sign</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Nonspecific noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus we could conclude that documentaries that are potentially valid for instruction (in our case, for teaching applied linguistics students) are those in which copies (metaphors and repetitions) and indices (conjunctions) prevail. To some extent, it does not seem relatively reasonable to offer films with suggestive signs. Films with evident manipulation in their structure are not somewhat influential for our purposes. The manipulation aim is quite apparent: a manipulator (a subject) “makes his profit” and “harm to an object” (in our case, a student who is watching this film) (Kutuza, 2018, p. 289). Other right hemisphere-oriented impact varieties are to block critical perception/comprehension of information.

Experiment

The experiment to verify the theoretical conclusions we conducted in March and April 2021. The comparison of the results obtained was the basis of the investigation. Therefore we selected
two experimental groups of second-year students. They study Philology (Applied linguistics) and have identical academic progress. Group 1 (14 persons) watched movies of lower and moderate impact producents. Group 2 (15 persons) watched movies of higher-level producents.

The tasks were as follows:
1) to watch the documentary;
2) to answer the teacher’s questions referring to the content (who, what, when, where);
3) to evaluate the ideas of the filmmakers.

The results revealed that:
1) the respondents from Group 1 were able to give more detailed and substantiated responses than their counterparts from Group 2;
2) there were fewer pauses between the teacher’s questions and students’ answers in Group 1. On the contrary, it took some time for students from Group 2 to think over and formulate their answers;
3) the students from Group 1 practically did not use emotional markers. The responses of students from Group 2 were marked by high. The students from Group 2 argued and discussed.

Recommendations
There are some recommendations for teachers to consider. We received the following conclusions from using this classroom task-based project:

1. Managing time constraints. It makes sense to prepare the class earlier to use students’ functional skills necessary for critical perception. It would also help students practice more essential tasks of thinking based on the model discussed, including brainstorming. In addition, setting more clear deadlines for the functions can manage time more efficiently.

2. The validity of the evaluation. The teacher must inform the students that the review is in progress. It does not just occur at the end of the activity: students need to note possible patterns, categories, and relationships emerging from the information. Finally, students should be able to apply the acquired skills by analyzing of the other documentaries on identical issues.

3. Group members’ participation. As with many cooperative classroom activities, all students do not obligatorily work equally. Therefore it is necessary to monitor their work in class, keeping in mind that there are learners who are less inclined to get involved in critical thinking perception of any real-world context; they give more preparatory tasks. Still, the experiment showed they also strengthened their essential thinking capabilities when applying the model.

4. Select relevant topics. The content is specialized (burning, topical domestic, international, urban, rural, political, economic, and cultural issues). Therefore, it is essential to offer students a choice of topics for further activities to stimulate their interest and solicit their ideas, thus increasing the benefits. The teacher can suggest the following topics: future career, entertainment choices, hobbies, study habits, work challenges, and experience.

5. Model application. It is also essential to broaden the potentialities of the model application by involving students in filling the structural scheme with all oral elements in English and Ukrainian.

Discussion
Their efficiency is high. The authentic video materials, when used for teaching, demonstrate complete scenarios which represent inevitable sociocultural reality, context, and communicative
situations verbally and nonverbally. It causes certain emotions and feelings, consequently promoting students’ skills of comparing, analyzing, and concluding. Original documentaries are a tremendous resource not only for developing linguistic competence (listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills) or sociocultural competence but, what is highly significant, for creating some skills of critical perception of the information.

Conclusion

We have tried to emphasize the importance of considering the neurological, linguistic, and semiotic structure of any information from cinema text. We have chosen documentary film content as the platform for developing this kind of analytical skill.

The experiment showed a considerable increase in the activity for the control group of students. Therefore, the designed neurological, linguistic, and semiotic model of the film structure can be used as the platform for practical application in training philology students, adding it with the nonverbal film components.

The manuscript is an original work.

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Saudi Female Teachers’ Identity Through the Use of Metaphors

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Abstract
Metaphors provide a framework through which teachers may convey their beliefs about teaching and learning. Using metaphor analysis, this article reflects on the views of three experienced teachers in Saudi Arabia. The study examines the metaphorical images female Saudi teachers use about teaching and learning. The question guiding the research study is What metaphors do Saudi female teachers use about teaching and learning? A qualitative research design was deemed best for this study through a case study. The individual metaphor analysis captured the teacher's individual identity; the researcher discovered that each metaphor linked components of identity and teaching practice in distinct and diverse ways. A following cross-case study highlighted the numerous conflicts that instructors experience. The findings revealed that obligations and responsibilities vary between metaphors, profession-related ambivalence, and disputes in teachers' images. Both the individual and cross-case analyses show that metaphors have the potential to enrich professional development and teacher education to advise policymakers, school administrators, teacher educators, and teachers.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, language, metaphors, Saudi teacher identity

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Introduction

Metaphor is a vital technique for uncovering identity that can give unique insights compared to other identity-related approaches, including interviews, journal reflections, and narrative inquiry. Metaphors are a tool for understanding a phenomenon in terms of another according to the definition (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, p. 5). In addition, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) explained that teachers might use metaphors to share their experiences about teaching and convey their beliefs.

According to Ahmed and Samed (2018), metaphors help teachers to discover the sense and meaning of self. It can also describe their professional and personal growth throughout their lives and careers. These metaphorical symbols have the power to reveal hidden information about emotion, teaching, and teacher roles (Lynch, & Fisher-Ari, 2017). As a result, metaphors are recognized as an archetype of teacher identity in addition to serving as proxies for professional thought (Fenwick, 2013; Saban 2006).

Metaphors help to organize activities. Holliday (2017) explained that we act following our perceptions of the world. Our metaphors through teaching and learning enable or limit some behaviors. Thus, using the conventional image of learning as filling one's brain with knowledge, prescribe instructional acts emphasizing knowledge transmissions, such as tutorials and lectures. The banking model of education, as articulated by Paulo Freire, is one where students simply receive knowledge deposits from their teachers (Freire, 1968). Furthermore, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) describe that metaphors are built on shared experience and cultural images that allow us to view one object as similar to another. Metaphors are culturally unique since they rely on shared understandings.

Metaphors, in this sense, serve as instruments for critical thought. They assist us in comprehending aspects of experience, such as teaching and learning, that are difficult to understand in their own right. Indeed, studies demonstrate that “teacher talk” is rich with metaphors. Teachers employ metaphors not just to convey topics to students, but as well as to characterize and comprehend their job as educators (Garcia, 2013). As a result, in ways that more candid discussion cannot, metaphor may be able to help us disclose our standard, sometimes nameless views and ideas.

Exploration of metaphors can help us understand teachers, along with their identity, which Anspal, Eisenschmidt, and Löffström (2012) illustrate as ‘character in context’. The challenge of understanding teacher identity is acknowledged by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009). Context and connections have a role in this (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). It is an inconstant meaning-making endeavor that pursues stasis (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). This raises the topic of how a successful or failing teacher may act under more favorable or challenging situations, and how their metaphor choice might reflect or influence that. Teacher identity, according to Beauchamp and Thomas (2011), is a product and a process, as well as disruptive and destabilizing. They identified agency and community as the two most essential variables in creating and forming a teacher's identity, as well as the acceptance of that identity by the teacher (Eteläpelto, Vähäsanen, Høkkä, & Paloneimi, 2014).
In studying Saudi female teachers’ metaphors, teachers have the opportunity to reexamine their own teaching. Since most of the studies regarding teachers’ identity through their use of metaphors have been conducted in foreign countries, the fact that this study was conducted in Saudi Arabia will certainly contribute to the existing research. The objective of this research is to examine the images Saudi female teachers use about teaching and learning through metaphors to better understand their identity. Therefore, the following research questions were asked:

What metaphors do Saudi female teachers use for teaching and learning?
How do Saudi female teachers’ metaphors unravel their identity?

The following sections in the study include a literature review on identity, metaphor, and language. Then the research methodology and rationale for the choice of methods are explained. It will include a description of the research instruments and data collection and analysis techniques. The study setting, participants and sampling techniques are also described. After that, analysis of the data is presented. Followed by the findings of the study. The paper ends with the limitations that were inevitable to the study and the implications and recommendations for future studies.

**Literature Review**

**Identity, metaphor and language**

Our identities are the roles we act on. In the stories we tell, we create and construct who we are (Hiver & Whitehead, 2018), in which “a sense of self” is created (Kerby, 1991, p. 6). Personal self-perceptions are shaped by institutional, social, and cultural factors (Hordvik, Fletcher, Haugen, Engebretsen, & Moller, 2021). They are linked with the societal responsibilities one feels bound to carry out (Berlak, 2014). Therefore, identity is defined as “the unspeakable stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history and of a culture” (Hall, as cited in Ecclestone, 2007, p.122). Metaphors are also mini-stories that are derived from human imaginations and subjective experiences (Turner, 1996). They give voice to our identities by organizing the numerous meanings of one's individual and social experiences into logical ideas. Metaphor is “a window into teacher identity” (Nguyen, 2016, p. 68). It is a helpful medium for instructors to reflect on their identities since “a large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate metaphors that make sense of our lives” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 232–233). Teachers can explain what would otherwise be indescribable (Thornbury, 1991) through verbalizing the complex construct in a concise and vivid language (Craig, 2018; Portaankorva-Koivisto & Grevholm, 2019), revealing the diversity as well as the complexity of teacher identity. As a result, metaphor is a valuable study tool for examining teacher identity (Arvaja, 2016; Baş, 2021; Zhu, Rice, Li, & Zhu, 2020).

Identity can be expressed in many different ways, and the most evident is through language. Vygotsky believed that tools and signs mediate human activity (Rushton, 2021; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995), and language is the primary means through which humans communicate and, as a result, evolve. Language, according to Bakhtin, gives voice to forces moving toward real verbal and intellectual unity and centralization, which grow in critical relation with the process of cultural and sociopolitical centralization. Put simply, language signifies the joint ideological and verbal worlds of a speaker, and thus portrays her as a part of various sociocultural processes. A person's words,
when said, are symbolic reflections of who she is, what she aspires to be, and where she has been. People have social group languages, professional, genetic languages, as well as generational languages (Bakhtin, 1981). These discourses within figured worlds would be used to navigate through various social situations and events. Bakhtin (1981) continues to assert, “The word in language is half someone else’s” (p. 293). Thus, to make one's language, we would depend on others' use of language to create links and connections.

In schools, teachers share a distinctive genre of language established in shared figured worlds (Goble & Stafford, 2022). They depend on one another to form shared goals and interests in socially situated groups. This dependence results in the emergence of speech genres that show the intersection of ways of being, speakers, and ideas. Speech genres become familiar and can consist of precise terms and phrases within a particular school, but probably seem strange to someone outside of the education speech genre (Nakamura, 2021). To become part of this community, teachers must adopt the discourse used by the other teachers and thus, build an identity within the community.

Many elements in the school can contribute to a teacher’s sense of belonging and discourse beyond language (Burner & Osler, 2021). For instance, the acceptable dress code in the building, the setting arrangements in the teachers’ lounge, and the way meetings are run; are all practices of performed belonging to a school community. Failing to adapt to these social ways might lead to a sense of exclusion and isolation. Schools form their way of performing and speech genres in their communities. A teacher’s discourse, in a Bakhtinian sense, represents the speech genres used in the school halls, the unique qualities of the school, and its community of professionals, in an ever-changing and fluid manner.

In the footsteps of Bakhtin, Gee (2011) used Discourse with a capital D to refer to the discrete connections between social groups and language. He explained that a Discourse with a capital 'D' is made up of unique methods of speaking and listening, as well as unique ways of writing and reading. These unique methods of speaking, listening or reading, and writing are accompanied by unique ways of acting, engaging, valuing, feeling, thinking, and believing (Gee, 2011). Gee’s description emphasized that individuals' ways of acting and interacting are outcomes of their social ways of being. Discourses are socially recognized identities manifested through how one acts and speaks.

Through interacting with others, teachers acquire the discourse of their school from those around them. As Gee (1996) stated, “Discourses are not mastered through overt instruction but by enculturation ‘apprenticeship’ into social practices” (p. 170). Thus, they are apprenticed by their peers into norms, discourse, and behaviors in their professional community building. This creates a sense of belonging and community as well as a rigid structure that cannot be worked against. Accordingly, it is vital to comprehend the roles of identity and discourse in a school setting, as well as how these concepts symbolize a school community’s social ways of being and the speech norms that regulate speech in schools.

Although there is existing research pertaining to the nature of teachers’ discourse and the use of metaphorical images in their discourse (Barger, 2022; Nguyen, 2022), limited research
studies examine Saudi teachers’ identity, and even less research if none exists in studying female
Saudi teachers use of metaphors to understand their identity. Studying teachers will provide insight
into what they believe about identity and how they make instructional decisions within the
classroom. Also, it will help determine how teachers derive those beliefs around their identity.

**Methods**

This study followed a qualitative research design. The researcher tried to interpret an
important phenomenon from Saudi female teachers' viewpoints while working as a data gathering
instrument to construct data in written form (Hatch, 2002). The researcher used a small number of
participants to analyze and interpret the data thoroughly.

Consequently, the main objective of this study was to explore Saudi female teachers’ beliefs
about learning and teaching through metaphors; therefore, a qualitative research approach was
deemed applicable. The researcher mainly chose case study design to allow participants' voices to
be heard.

The researcher extorted metaphors from three Saudi female teachers and then analyzed them.
Throughout this study, the researcher portrays descriptions of the three participants, data sources
and their collection, and how the data was analyzed.

The study was conducted during the first semester 2022 in Hail city in Saudi Arabia. Participants in this study were Saudi female teachers who taught at elementary schools. The sampling of these participants was purposeful (Staller, 2021). The researcher purposely chose to examine teachers with a wide range of teaching experience. The teachers’ years of classroom experience ranged from 19-30 years. The researcher believed that teachers with more experience could explain their assumptions more than novice teachers.

*Asma*

Asma is a fourth-grade Arabic Language Arts teacher. She taught for 30 years and considered herself a learner. Asma taught language arts as well as the Quran. According to Asma, her principal was very helpful and listened to teachers’ needs. She encouraged her to write about the teaching strategies she created and send teachers to the Ministry of Education to learn about the *101 Active Learning Strategies*.

*Sarah*

Sarah taught for 28 years in many different schools ranging from elementary to high school. During data collection, she was teaching sixth-grade Arabic Language Arts, *Hadith* (the sayings of Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him), and History. Sarah taught students from different nationalities, such as Syrians and Egyptians.

*Monerah*

Monerah was a fourth-grade teacher who taught in a school near her house. Monerah had a Diploma degree, which is a two-year teaching degree. However, she continued her studies to earn a Bachelor’s degree in the Arabic language. She mainly taught first grade for 19 years. She was elected by her principal and advisors to lead the school and is now a principal. The school she
taught in is located in a neighborhood that tends toward high-income families. This was a neighborhood where parents focused on their daughter’s education.

**Research Instruments**

The data in this study consisted of the metaphors generated by the participants. Before beginning the study, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Hail. Unlike many earlier studies, this study did not generate ideas for possible metaphors for the participants (e.g., Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011), nor were metaphors assigned (e.g., Berliner, 1990), or constructed collectively (e.g., Martinez, Saule, & Huber, 2001). Instead of purposefully leading participants toward metaphorical expressions of their identities, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collecting instrument to extract participants' subconsciously used metaphors. This will aid in avoiding data distortions during direct metaphor inquiry (Hille & Phillips, 1968). For each semi-structured interview, participants were asked about their teaching instructions, difficulties they encountered, teachers’ role, their future views, and suggestions for the Saudi educational system.

To avoid leading them, tremendous effort was taken to guarantee that they could express themselves completely without interruptions from the interviewer. As the participants expounded on some areas, follow-up questions arose, either for a more in-depth understanding or to elaborate certain elements.

Teachers participated in five interviews for at least 45-minute. Three teachers were chosen to participate in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In addition, the researcher acquired documents and artifacts from teachers that represent their use of metaphors for learning and teaching. Such artifacts and documents included student work samples, lesson plans, and copies of activities. The researcher also asked teachers to take photos of their classrooms. As the researcher collected data, she used a journal to reflect and write ideas while interacting and listening to the participants during the interviews.

**Validity and Reliability**

To increase reliability and validity, the researcher used several methods. Firstly, she triangulated the data collected from the interviews and artifacts. Secondly, she reported all the research study stages in detail. Thirdly, she occupied the direct quotations from the participants without destroying their originality (Eldh, Årestedt, & Berterö, 2020). Thus, the metaphors used by the participants were quoted directly and were explained in detail in the findings.

**Analysis**

The analysis process was done in two different phases. The researcher investigated and analyzed each teacher's metaphor independently during the first phase, then used a cross-case analysis of all participants' metaphors. The study’s findings on the individual metaphors were examined in the second phase.

**Individual Metaphor Analysis**

In this phase, the researcher followed Armstrong, Davis, and Paulson (2011) in collecting and analyzing metaphors. The researcher started by looking for metaphorical phrases in the
transcriptions. For example, in the teachers’ narration, “good manufacturing of teachers does not exist” “good manufacturing” is a metaphorical statement in which the target domain is the teacher of this figurative term. Because certain metaphors were "implicitly embedded," transcriptions were read cautiously (Oxford et al., 1998). The data also includes metaphorical expressions about students, teaching, and school linked with the target teacher domain. Next, each metaphor was titled to "map source domain onto target domain" (Armstrong et al., 2011). "Good manufacturing," for example, refers to the Craftsman source domain. The teacher is mapped to the characteristics of craftsmen, such as "built themselves" and "need to practice their craft," and the term is titled Teacher Is A Craftsman. As a result, teacher identity is derived from essential elements in the source domain as they relate to a specific linguistic context. Finally, the researcher organized the metaphorical expressions into subcategories by grouping them together. “When a craftsman creates ten of these cups (points to the cup in her hand), it's not like a craftsman who only makes one cup,” and “good manufacturing of teachers does not exist” are two examples of Teacher Is A Craftsman.

Although the transcriptions were coded individually, the researcher analyzed each metaphor in its linguistic context after each phase. The researcher then analyzed the data based on the metaphorical categories. In the conceptual metaphor, we do not choose a random source domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and the most efficient employment of metaphor represents the core dominant conceptual association (Evans, 2019). As a result, changes in metaphor frequencies are an essential predictor of changes in teacher identity.

In this process, the researcher studied each participant's metaphors one at a time and inspected each phrase. After that, the researcher reviewed my coding with the participants to verify my interpretation. The researcher used a priori categories from positioning theory to code each metaphor: plotlines, roles, assumptions, and obligations (Harré & Langenhove, 2003). Plotlines were indicated through their statements on how a teacher lives her life, how she interacts with students, how they arranged teaching or learning, and how they created classroom settings. Comments that indicated teachers' beliefs about how they compensated colleagues, students, and parents, and the teaching profession were categorized as obligations statements. Teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning were identified using roles as a code to identify statements in which they expressed what they thought to be the act of teaching and what they expected of students. Responsibilities were used as a code to identify statements that highlighted teachers' beliefs about what they are responsible for in the classroom as well as what students or other classroom culture contributors are accountable for.

Cross-case Analysis

After interpreting each individual metaphor, the researcher conducted a cross-case analysis. Throughout this phase, the researcher applied a holistic examination for each metaphor, and then identified themes that occur across all metaphors.

Merriam (1998) advocated for the conduct of multiple case studies in two stages: first, the “within-case analysis” followed by “cross-case analysis.” (p. 194). Data was collected and analyzed separately, conclusions were drawn, and findings were presented. The cross-case analysis begins once each case has been thoroughly examined. The objective of qualitative, inductive,
multi-case research is to develop abstractions between cases (Merriam, 1998). The researcher constructs a broad explanation that fits each of the particular situations, even though the cases will vary in their details (Yin, 2009).

Cross-case analysis, according to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), is complex and requires a close examination of complicated process configurations within each case. The cross-case analysis differs from data analysis in a single qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998). The results might range from a consistent description throughout cases, suggesting consistency, to emergent themes or concepts, to theoretical constructs produced from an overarching framework.

In this study, the researcher completed, categorized, summarized, and analyzed the individual cases to compare and provide insight for the cross-case analysis. The variety of cases offered new insights and reconsideration of the categories.

**Findings**

**Findings from the individual metaphors**

**Caretaker metaphor**

Monerah said she always tries to nurture her students by caring for them. She explicitly said, “A teacher is a nurturer”; she explained that she tried “to care for them [her students] after her classes by asking them about their lives at home and if they need any help whatsoever.” This, she said, “help[ed] me in understanding how I can connect their pace of learning with what is happening in their lives.” In that sense, she was concerned with the emotional well-being of her students, but this, of course, brought mixed feelings from within her students and her own thought processes. Monerah expressed her concern for her young students’ sensitive nature. She then explained what she does to establish learning settings that are both safe and conducive.

Monerah noted this when she revealed that she was mindful of “feelings and causes of feelings with students.” Despite her feelings, Monerah specified that a teacher should be very careful with her feelings as parents might not know the basis of those feelings. She indicated, “I always ask student teachers who come in my classroom not to ask students a lot of personal questions and not to hug my students.” She then explained, “a nurture needs to know the fine line between excessive emotion and nurturing.” The plotline she tries to enact in her classroom is one in which the instructor creates the classroom environment to promote each student's learning. The teacher, like nurturers, spends her life attempting to create an 'ideal' atmosphere conducive to great learning and growth. Throughout her speech, Monerah demonstrates her underlying commitment to student learning as her primary obligation as a teacher.

Here, Monerah recognizes the importance of human communication, behavior, and thought in the teaching profession. Moral and emotional aspects of development, relationships, and values are prioritized. She promotes the child's growth as a human being.

She also views teaching as gardening. She stated, “I'm trying to plant something.” A gardener, as we know, tries to generate ideal growing circumstances. She draws a border, the greatest area for nourished growth. She cracks even the toughest pans to give seeds room to grow. She removes a few large boulders from the field. The farmer's responsibility, therefore, becomes...
twofold: to feed nutrients to the growing plants, as well as to prune and weed as needed. The remainder is taken care of by the plants. Teachers develop, feed, hydrate, and nurture their students' brains rather than pouring material into them for them to learn how to learn. Our goal is to create lifelong learners, not just information collectors.

This shows that she believes it is the primary job of teachers to provide possibilities for students' progress. A teacher's duty is to further her own development as a person who understands and nurtures the development of others as well as to give all that is required for this to happen. Furthermore, the teacher creates an environment where the student works hard to learn and contribute.

Monerah's identity as a teacher is exposed. She describes herself as a believer in the ability of all children to learn if they are encouraged and cared for. She works hard to expand her knowledge so that the teaching atmosphere can be improved over time. It is the teacher's obligation to guarantee that all circumstances for efficient growth and learning are in place.

Craftsmen Metaphor

When the researcher asked Sarah her opinion on “why some teachers do not have a complete understanding of the importance of meaning as well as fluency, why is it that teachers mainly focus on fluency rather than meaning?” Sarah expressed, “…generally, good manufacturing of teachers does not exist, we simply do not have a creative manufacturing of the teachers”. Her choice of words was interesting as she was explaining teacher preparation during her college years. The manufacturing metaphor, in contrast to the image of a craftsman, lowers the teacher to a tool of an overarching bureaucratic authority that aims to control every step of the process through standardized scientific techniques. However, in her metaphor, it was clear that she associated manufacturing with creativity. Hence, in her point of view, there can be quality manufacturing, which is lacking in Saudi Arabia.

In another instance, Sarah assured, “…effective teachers are few because they are the ones who built themselves to become teachers, meaning they were not built to be teachers, meaning it's by her primitiveness that she is a successful teacher…” Again, the image of building oneself to improve teaching captured an industrialized vision of education and teacher training. From Sarah’s standpoint, colleges and universities do not train teachers to be good, effective, and prosperous; the teacher herself has to work toward that goal. Sarah, here, criticized teacher preparation and the lack of good preparation for educating Saudi teachers.

On the other hand, Sarah’s image of a student was different. When asked, “in your opinion, how does reduced curriculum content affect students, especially with reading?” Sarah stated, “skills require practice, which is obtained via repetition. Your abilities improve as you practice more. Students are craftsmen who must sharpen their skills. A craftsman who makes 10 of these cups is not the same as a craftsman who only makes one cup.” Teaching was compared to a glassmaker working with hot glass in the craft metaphor. The master craftsman's sense of feeling allows him to know when to increase or decrease heat, when the product is close to completion and what more work is needed, or when to admit that this specific object is a failure and that it's time to start over.
These metaphorical terms reflect a narrative in which the teacher involves her students in the experience of learning as fellow teachers and learners. She anticipates that both she and they will continue to grow in knowledge and abilities. Her metaphor depicts a teacher dedicated to learning as a continuous and reciprocal process. She imagines the teacher and the students moving on parallel adventures that the teacher has planned, but that they all learn and develop due to their experiences. The teacher has a responsibility to continue learning, documenting developing knowledge and abilities, and achieving the learning objective of the students. She provides the necessary knowledge to students; however, it is their responsibility to participate in the learning process. Her ambition is that her students would go beyond her and explore new territory, even though it is up to them to make that choice.

Sarah's portrayal of her teaching identity leads her to believe that teachers influence the learning experience, learning theory, and speed in the classroom. Teachers and students alike become learners and teachers in the classroom. Sarah's concept of teaching is primarily about establishing a space where she may continue to grow as a teacher, and she expects students to follow her in her search for knowledge naturally.

**Authority Metaphors**

When asked about the kinds of assessment she might use in the classroom, she indicated, “I cannot play in the field and fight if I do not have trained soldiers; the pivot of education is on the teacher.” This war/military metaphor bridged a socio-cultural disposition of aggression to construct meaning and understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Dower, 2010). Uniformity, toughness, and conformity were the themes conveyed by this metaphor (Badley & Hollabaugh, 2012). Many teachers shared this ultimate goal of uniformity, viewing schools as factories whose goal was to produce uniform and productive individuals. It is understood that a student comes prepared with books, writing instruments, sits in a separate seat, responds to cues and signals from the teacher, and the teacher communicates the activities and topic for class time. Order is related to the delivery of instruction and the content of teaching. For teaching to occur, there must be a structure, organization, and set of rules that are explicit or otherwise understood so that subject matter is delivered and meaning is constructed. These rules were implicit in Sarah’s talk to get students on task.

Her use of such a metaphor is an indication that teaching is not an easy task and that teachers need to be prepared to handle issues that can be difficult and hard to battle. On the other hand, teachers as soldiers might mean that they follow orders from higher figures such as advisors and principals. Furthermore, this might imply that teachers just regurgitate what they have been taught. Teachers may lose their jobs if they do not follow instructions. Although the researcher believes this is not what Sarah intended behind her use of such a word, this might come to the reader’s mind.

Furthermore, the teacher as an authority metaphor might be considered self-centered and power hungry. Sarah’s emphasizes the teacher's role as a public servant. She believes in education as a method of preparing future people to serve the public good as public servants. In Sarah's metaphor, a teacher works hard to cultivate learning and a respectful environment. She encourages...
students to become "intelligent citizens" and "future leaders" by working with them. Yet, she argues that this must be in a climate of order and discipline; she argues,

We should build the classes according to our culture. A disciplined culture. I mean, when you enter the mosque, you enter into discipline. When you describe the disciplined classes, the imam before he starts praying, says 'plugged the defect.' The process is disciplined. In our councils, we sit in much discipline. If we have to respond to this culture, any change in the situation the student will understand as a state of chaos, he will not use freedom of movement, he will understand it as disorder; I mean we have to respond to our culture and deal according to our cultural formation.

Many students and teachers, including Sarah, hold this belief, which is strongly established in the Saudi educational system. This belief is still dominant in Sarah's belief system, despite the fact that the role of teachers has been pushed to move from authoritarian information transmitter to learner adviser and facilitator. She was sure that a teacher-centered classroom is more efficient in Saudi Arabia.

According to Sarah, a teacher performs a public service role in which she is expected to provide an education that would help future citizens thrive. A teacher does this by fostering an environment of mutual respect in the classroom, where the teacher is responsible for acting correctly, providing a high-quality curriculum, and holding students responsible for their learning. Students in this atmosphere participate in the content and conduct politely because they respect the teachers.

*Holy figure metaphor*

Although Sarah’s use of metaphors focused on teachers as manufactured, Asma had a different metaphor. When asking Asma about the reason she couldn’t say I do not know the answer to your students, she specified,

that students see teachers as a pyramid; if you tell the student that she is right and the teacher is wrong, she will not believe you because the teacher is like a messenger everything she says is true and correct. If you tell the student ‘I do not know,’ the image of a teacher will be shaken.”

Asma vision the teacher as a glorified figure that cannot be wrong or out of knowledge. They are like pyramids, strongly built, firmly grounded, bear different climates, and have a significant cultural and historical status. These characteristics of pyramids can also be applied to teachers, which can be viewed as dehumanizing of the teacher.

Asma also believed that teachers are messengers. A messenger in Saudi Arabia is like a prophet. Some prophets in Islam are also called messengers because they carry the message of Allah and need to spread it around the world. This illustrated the tremendous responsibility teachers have when teaching students. Prophets changed humanity and the globe through their lives and words. People can learn about God by looking at them. If people obey the prophet and adequately manage the physical world, it can resemble a holy nation. The prophets provide the blueprint for correctly structuring it in their lives, teachings, and rules. Prophets issue laws, impart wisdom and spirit from a higher authority, equip their believers for the future, and undertake other duties comparable to those of a teacher (Clarken, 1997).
Teachers can consider the following characteristics of prophets: prophets teach and demonstrate love, yet they have high standards for behavior. They are world authorities, yet they reflect a greater power. Prophets lead humanity away from its restricted beliefs and toward a higher and more fulfilling existence. This religious image can mean that teachers are more knowledgeable than others, and this is not always true. The researcher can see how the Saudi cultural view is affecting Huda’s perception. In Saudi Arabia, there is a famous saying, “the one who taught me a letter; I do not forget his favor, I will be polite, loyal, and maintain amiability to him.”

Findings from Cross-case Analysis

In this section, the researcher studies the findings in a cross-case analysis. The examined metaphors draw each teacher's individual views on learning and teaching. They specify the teacher's role, her duties, obligations, reward, and responsibilities. Interestingly, each metaphor brings teaching and learning practices together in distinctive and unique ways.

Obligations and Responsibilities Vary between Metaphors

The metaphors presented by the participants uniquely position teachers' identities, ranging from caregiver to craftsman, soldier, holy figure, and scaffolder. The heterogeneity in teacher identity plotlines, teacher and student roles, teacher duties, and beliefs about teaching and learning demonstrate the metaphors' specific traits connected to teacher identity. Variances in metaphors potentially lead to teaching differences.

We can easily notice how different the identity plotlines are when we compare teacher as caretaker to the teacher as a soldier, for example. The teacher as caretaker depicts a teacher who tries to minimize obstacles and distractions by concentrating all of her attention on providing a rich, stimulating atmosphere that nurtures and encourages students to develop their abilities and talents. The soldier, on the other hand, sees the teacher as a strong figure who reinforces mutual respect and obedience in her students. She balances between justice and compassion in her relationships with students. She values students' training as citizens and future leaders, constructing a curriculum that will help students acquire the skills and knowledge most beneficial to the community.

The use of metaphors reveals differences in teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. The difference between a teacher as a craftsman and a teacher as a holy figure exemplifies this. The image of the teacher as a craftsman presupposes that the teacher and students are capable of and will learn independently, that students are responsible for their learning, and that they will have power over what they learn. As a holy figure, the teacher is expected to design learning, assess student work, and deliver exactly what the student needs.

Within the metaphors, there is also variation in the roles offered to students. When comparing a teacher's role as a caretaker to a teacher's role as a soldier, the students' roles are vastly different. Students are seen as dependent and fragile in the caretaker metaphor, and the teacher wraps them in a safe and insulated environment to ensure their learning. Students in the soldier metaphor, on the other hand, are prepared to contribute to society and are required to fulfill as responsible members of the classroom community.
Finally, the metaphors illustrate the teachers' obligations. We notice a lot of variation when we compare the metaphor of the teacher as a holy figure to the metaphor of the teacher as a craftsman. As a holy figure, the teacher has a responsibility to know her material as well as the breadth and sequencing of the curriculum. She creates learning experiences for her students that are both motivating and educational. Throughout her teaching career, a teacher's obligations as a craftsman metaphor change. The teacher eagerly pursues learning in the beginning. She isolates and shields herself as she gains experience, putting what she's learned into practice and steadily improving her teaching methods. Finally, as a teacher, she feels driven to share what she has learned to influence and steer the teaching of others.

**Profession-related ambivalence**

Although Asma, Sarah, and Monerah were all very experienced teachers, they all highlighted that teacher preparation is poor in Saudi Arabia. Due to this, they all advised professional development, whether through taking a course or through educating oneself. Monerah took a course on reading using different voices; on the other hand, Asma educated herself through searching the Internet.

Teachers in the study all emphasized the need for structure in the instructional process. Asma, for instance, stressed on classroom behaviors. Sarah focused on discipline and classroom management. Monerah also paid particular importance to structure because students feel comfortable in knowing what will happen in the reading lesson. Despite their attention to structure, their beliefs regarding how reading is taught differed. For instance, Sarah stressed on decoding while Monerah stressed on comprehension.

The teachers’ metaphor also helped shape how they view their professional roles. Monerah viewed herself as a nurturer cared for her students inside and outside the classroom. Her teaching resulted from her autonyms acts in instruction. Sarah viewed teachers as soldiers who could handle complex issues and work in order and system. Her teaching was consequent from her traditional viewpoint that agrees with the Saudi culture and takes into account the specialty of the Arabic language. She also viewed students as craftsmen who needed to practice their learning. Asma viewed teachers as pyramids, prophets, and messengers. They are always knowledgeable and do not commit wrong acts. She also considered the scripted curriculum as a Quran that cannot be changed. Asma’s image of the prophet was different from her modernist viewpoint.

Through these findings, a connection was found between teachers’ use of metaphors and their feelings, personalities, beliefs, and judgments. In Sarah’s case, she generated metaphors that are balanced between positive and negative metaphors. She appeared to have neutral beliefs about teaching and learning. She sees herself as a compassionate and attentive person who wants to help her students. Meanwhile, Asma implied a stronger emotional attachment towards her beliefs on her role as a teacher and teaching. On the other hand, Monerah’s metaphors were mainly connected to the ideas of community. She viewed herself as a nurturer whose students could depend on her for help and created a safe environment for the students. Certainly, teachers’ metaphors portrayed that teaching is not a linear, one-dimensional job. For instance, teachers had to accommodate different learning styles of their students as well as adapt various learning and teaching situations.
The aim of analyzing teachers' metaphors was to employ a familiar image to investigate complex fields of meaning. However, no single orientation cleared this matrix. This was evident in the distinct metaphors teachers have created in this study. These many different metaphors support the multidimensionality of the teaching and learning processes.

**Conflict in the Teacher's Image**

There were tensions in what teachers believed the meaning of teacher in Islam throughout the data. It must be noted that there is a difference between what culture perceives as the role of the teacher and what Islam views. In Saudi culture, teachers are seen as intelligent individuals with the knowledge that must not be questioned. In addition, they are more experienced elders who are heavily respected. A form of respect in culture means not to ask questions because this might be seen as challenging the teacher, which is a form of disrespect. On the other hand, Islam requires Muslims to use thinking and questioning to guide them to find knowledge and truths. Teachers, however, confuse the role of the teacher in Saudi culture and Islam.

The researcher believes that the Ministry of Education should use Islam in guiding them to think about the importance of teachers’ voices. Islam advocates heavily on gaining knowledge and critical thinking. Thus, it praises teachers for they are the ones who help develop and guide behaviors for individuals and communities. The Prophet (peace be upon him) valued teachers and showed their high status as he has “been sent as a teacher.” In addition, he (peace be upon him) encouraged people to “Seek knowledge, even in China.” Islam’s advocacy for gaining knowledge is also evident in the Quran, which asks humans to think and ponder about the truth.

Furthermore, The Holy Quran emphasizes the importance of different sciences and is full of modern scientific facts, such as, the relativity of time, and the rotation of the earth (Roji, & El Husarri, 2021). This invites Muslims to critically think, reason, and reflect on these natural phenomena which will lead them to the truth. A verse in the holy Quran says, “Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand” (Al-Baqara 2:164).

Accordingly, a Muslim teacher must ponder and think about the educational policies. This is opposed to what Asma believes, the curriculum is like a Quran that must not be altered. Teachers should question their role as a teacher and deserve to have a voice. The teacher’s role should be a mentor and a guide to acquiring this information rather than the source of knowledge. As advocated in Islam, she must encourage using different learning skills such as reflection, reasoning, and critical thinking. This will create an environment that empowers free thinking, questioning, and dialogue, a practice that has not been done due to cultural reasons.

Unfortunately, in Arab cultures, students don't question information given by the teachers, as they are viewed as high-status people who know better. Asma, for instance, assumes this view and believes teachers should never say ‘I do not know’ to their students. However, several of verses in
the holy Quran praised questioning and thinking, such as when God Almighty allowed prophets to ask him about faith, and his existence and God responded and accepted such questioning. Consequently, all questions are allowed and welcomed. In Sarah's case, she seems to advocate such questioning when she thinks about the figures that are represented in the textbooks. She wanted her students to think of other figures. She accepted the inquiry and encouraged it in her teaching.

The preceding is essential for many reasons. First, it encourages teachers to adhere more to the Islam ways of thought and less to the cultural hierarchy because it gives teachers more freedom in thinking and questioning. In addition, it creates a theoretical framework that guides the development of new educational policies that are rooted in Saudi culture. This framework can motivate Muslim teachers to use constructive thinking as they see the connection between Islam and new pedagogical practices. Applying Islamic teachings as a guide, can lessen the use of traditional educational methods that lack creativity and lead students to limited mentalities and abilities (Alghamdi & Li, 2012).

Discussion
This study provides convincing evidence for the use of metaphors to decipher teacher identity. It adds to earlier research by finding that teacher identity is social and individual, as well as, continuous and discontinuous. Teachers' identities were portrayed as ongoing and developing, as evidenced by their systematic use of metaphors. The metaphorical analysis demonstrated that former and current teacher identities have gone through dialectical negotiations, neither completely agreeing with nor completely denying each other.

Throughout the interviews, teachers used nearly the same set of metaphorical categories, as well as several subcategories, implying that their new and past experiences were highly interactive with one another (Arvaja, 2016), allowing their present and past selves to carry out a coherent whole (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). The varied applications of the subcategories and their expressions in specific settings, as well as the change in subcategory sequences, mirrored teachers’ main identity changes, illustrating their discontinuous side of selves (Hong, 2010). The discontinuity is frequently intertwined with and fostered by shifts in their agency, emotions and beliefs (Hiver & Whitehead, 2018). As a complex and multidimensional construct, teacher identity is a process as well as an outcome (Cross, 2017), emphasizing a teacher's socio-cultural values and professional settings.

The different metaphorical categories and subcategories that teachers employed reveal that identities are culturally bound (Xiong, Li, & Qu, 2015) and contextually structured (Flores & Day, 2006). Metaphor use might emerge from an individual's quest to discover meaning in self within a specific situation (Stofflet, 1996); since metaphors can assist us in coping with the new and unknown. Teachers can employ metaphors to express their complicated identities that are contextually and culturally bound, resulting in identity discontinuity and traditional beliefs, leading to identity persistence (Gao & Cui, 2021).
Limitations
Throughout the study, the data obtained from the interviews was subjected to many limitations. The interview findings may have been influenced by personal bias and the participants' emotional state at the time of the interview (Patton, 2014). It is also possible that participants reacted in a self-serving manner (Patton, 2014).

It is impossible to generalize the findings to all teacher populations since the study's sample was not randomly selected. Instead, purposeful sampling was used to capture a suitable degree of diversity of teacher characteristics and to reflect the population of interest (Patton, 2014).

It should also be noted that when conducting interviews in Saudi Arabia, gender, for example, was an essential part of the socio-cultural environment to consider. The researcher only interviewed female teacher’s because Saudi Arabian education is gender segregated, making it impossible to interview male teachers. According to Shogren, Shaw, Raley, and Wehmeyer (2018), research procedures should be culturally sensitive, and methodology may be altered to meet the culture and context of the study.

Implications and Recommendations
While the researcher recognizes the study’s limitations, because she only examined metaphors from three practicing teachers, the researcher believes that future studies with more teacher metaphors would give other researchers higher confidence in the findings. This research contributes to the knowledge of how teachers' metaphors reflect their teaching beliefs. In addition, metaphors can help teachers position themselves regarding their identity, student interactions, and classroom practices. Teachers' metaphors might be carefully investigated to find leverage areas for change and development.

Future studies on teachers' metaphors should focus on determining the extent to which metaphors might assist them in reflecting on their identity. There are cases in which root metaphors alter [or hold] when students become instructors, as Cortazzi and Jin (2020) argue. What is unknown at this time is how teachers carry out the instructional practices that emerge from their cognitive systems. Researchers might conduct more longitudinal studies that examine teachers' metaphors from the time they enter a teacher education program to their first few years of practice.

Conclusion
The study looks at the metaphors Saudi female instructors employ to describe teaching and learning. What metaphors do Saudi female instructors employ regarding teaching and learning? is the research study's main topic. Through the use of a case study, a qualitative research approach was found to be the most effective. The researcher found that each metaphor connected elements of identity and teaching practice in unique and different ways after conducting an individual metaphor analysis on each instructor. A subsequent cross-case analysis brought to light the many tensions that teachers face. The results showed that duties and obligations differ across metaphors, profession-related ambivalence, and conflicts in teachers' perceptions. Metaphors have the ability to enhance professional development and teacher education through advising policymakers, school administrators, teacher educators, and teachers, according to both the individual and cross-case studies.
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References


Motivational Impact of Emulation in a Saudi Writing Classroom at Majmaah University

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Abstract
This study aims to assess emulative interventions conducted in a Saudi writing classroom at Majmaah University during the academic year 2019/2020. The interventions, i.e., orientation and revision, were needed to deal with writing challenges experienced by underachieving students. Thus, the main question to address at this connection is whether emulative intervention could enhance Saudi EFL learners’ writing since they were generally believed to lack motivation to pursue higher education, as evidenced by their indifference to classes. Also, the students were observed to demand satisfactory attendance records, high coursework scores, high final exam grades, etc., though they had not worked hard to achieve these goals. The qualitative data was collected from 18 male students enrolled in the English program at the Community college. It consisted of the participants’ reaction to both success stories (collected from orientation sessions) and revision using guidelines set by expert writers and achieving students as informed by the literature. More specifically, toward the end of the second term of the academic year 2019/2020 a focus group discussion was conducted where the students freely expressed their views of the advantages and disadvantages of the intervention. Discussion was originally conducted in Arabic and then translated in English. The results revealed that the interventions effectively produced positive attitudes among participants toward writing, gaining confidence in themselves as writers and, ridding themselves of writing fears. The results led to some implications for both learning and instructional practices in the writing classroom.

Keywords: emulation, expert writers, imitation, intervention, underachieving writers, writing

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Introduction

Although the role of motivation in second/foreign language acquisition dates to Gardner and Lambert (1959), it can still be a vibrant research area with an emphasis on the acquisition of skills that characterize the classroom in the twenty-first century, such as academic honesty, digital literacy, critical thinking, globalization, and information literacy (Hughes & Acedo, 2016). Twenty-first-century skills also include critical skills and the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) (Joynes, Rossignoli, & Amonoo-Kuofi, 2019). Indeed; recent research has focused on motivational factors affecting the acquisition of twenty-first-century skills in language classrooms (Al-hoorie & McIntyre, 2020; Czerkawski & Bert, 2020; Talmi, Hazzan & Katz, 2018).

Twenty-first-century skills could equally lend themselves to the writing pedagogy to facilitate the acquisition and practice of writing skills that were once considered challenging for Arabic-speaking learners. A comprehensive search on major research platforms, i.e., Researchgate.net, Google Scholar, and Academia.edu, has shown that writing challenges have mainly become a significant concern for studies conducted in the Saudi context from many perspectives. Overall; the research addressed curricular issues (Ezza, 2010; 2012), writing problems (Khuwaileh & Shoumali, 2000; Barzanji, 2016; Alharbi, 2017), and attitudes towards writing (Ankawi, 2020; Al-Murshidi, 2014). Classroom researchers also examined the effect of specific intervention measures to assist the students in overcoming these challenges and thus produce enhanced writing quality. For instance, research focused on orientation (Ezza, 2012), flipped instruction (Chatta & Haque, 2020), collaborative writing (Alkhalaf, 2020), revision strategies to enhance writing quality (Ezza, Alhuqail & Alwehaibi, 2019), and technology-based instruction (Ezza & Bakry, 2014; Ezza, Alhuqail & Elhussain, 2019).

A necessary intervention that has been neglected in the literature is the use of emulation as a teaching/learning strategy in the Saudi writing classroom. Defined as doing something as someone else because of your admiration for them (Oxford Advanced learner’s Dictionary, 2015, p. 489), emulation can be a powerful instructional tool that can both cause the students to have positive attitudes toward writing and equip them with best writing techniques. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to explore the educational opportunities of emulation in a writing classroom at Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia. Also, the study intends to assess the participants’ emulation-related writing experiences. To achieve these objectives, the study attempts answers to the following questions:

1. What educational opportunities could emulation bring into the writing classroom?
2. How do the study participants perceive emulation?

The subsequent sections of the paper include review of the literature, methods, results and conclusion and limitations.

Literature Review

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines the verb *emulate* and, hence, *emulation* as “to try to do something as well as somebody else because you admire them” (p. 489). As such, the term *emulation* has been widely investigated in educational research as both a teaching and learning strategy that could effectively enhance the student’s performance as it involves
connecting the students to a model (i.e., a teacher, researcher, author, etc.) who would eventually motivate them to improve their performance through emulation. To give insight into the affective dimension of emulation, it is crucial to attempt a sketchy account of the Social Learning Theory (SLT) under which it is subsumed.

As envisioned by its founder, i.e., Bandura (1972), SLT views learning as a laborious and hazardous process that could not result solely from the actions of the individual learner. Thus, it proposes modeling as a way to acquire new behavior forms. By observing others, people can form ideas “of how new behaviors are formed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action” (p. 23). The strategy of observational learning, Bandura theorizes, is governed by attentional and retention processes. Where the first process is concerned, SLT stipulates, “people cannot learn much by observation unless they attend to and perceive accurately the significant features of the modeled behavior” (p. 24). What is selectively observed includes specific characteristics, features, and interactions. All modeled behavior forms (i.e., aspects, features, and interactions) are central to regulating observational experiences. The effectiveness of these modeled forms depends on the social role of the individual being observed, as some individuals tend to receive more attention than others. In other words, the “models who possess engaging qualities are sought, while those lacking pleasing characteristics are generally ignored or rejected” (p. 24).

The attentional process cannot function properly without the retention process. That is, the influence of the modeled behavior cannot be effective if it is not remembered. Thus, for people to benefit from the observed behavior of the models, they should represent it “in memory in the symbolic form” (Bandura, 1972, p.25) so that they can later reproduce it more accurately. However, a close approximation of the new behavior requires people “to refine it through self-corrective adjustments based on information feedback from performance and from focused demonstrations of segments that have been partially learned” (p.28).

Along the SLT lines reported above, and particularly as of the early 2000s, educational research focused on emulation as a powerful learning motivator (Acerbi, Tennie, & Nunn, 2011; Hill, 2009; Cane, 2009; Coddler, 2011; Graham, 2016; Graham & Perin, 2007; Jonas, 2017; Kindeberg, 2013; Kory-Westlund & Breazel, 2017; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2002). Taking an SLT stance, Kindeberg (2013) argued that the lack of recognition of the role of emotions in education led learning theories to neglect the importance of emulation as pedagogical support to student learning. She contends that people are born into an eternal reliance on each other and that human nature can only be conceived in a community. Thus, the essential human dimension for teachers is the characteristic of dependency as it makes their verbal actions credible, renders what they teach interesting, and creates a more secure learning environment.

Emulation is an abstract concept that can be operationalized in terms of modeling. According to Hill et al. (2009), a model is an example that shows how a student might behave based on the expectation that observation of a model “will impact the students’ perceptions and understandings about the subject. Where writing instruction is concerned, modeling “allows the students to observe the thinking and actions of a strong writer,” (p. 91), and thus acquire the “features of effective writing (Graham et al., 2016, p. 18). For example, the students are provided
with written examples to read, analyze and emulate their critical elements such as tone, style, forms, and patterns to eventually integrate into their writing (Graham & Perin, 2007; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2000).

Yet there are some views that reduce emulation to mere imitation, which involves copying the qualities and processes of the modeled behavior (Cane, 2009; Root-Bernstein, 2017; Acerbi et al., 2011). As such, emulation is argued to fail to preserve the modeled behavior. It was also contended that emulation is excessively prescriptive and tends to deprive the students of their voices and creativity (Abбуhl, 2011). Where writing is concerned, emulation is perceived to undermine the writing process by “privileging form before the development of ideas and failing to provide information to students on the writing processes that gave rise to the model” (Abбуhl, 2011) these critical views can be refuted on several grounds. First, emulation played a significant role in the formulation of two major approaches to writing: Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) and writing revision. The first approach is a well-known modern instructional intervention that Karen Harris and Steve Graham, and their associates developed to handle writing challenges faced by adolescents (cf. Graham et al., 2016; Graham & Perin, 2007). SRSD has been widely accepted by writing scholars across the globe owing to its effectiveness in improving the composing competence of both achieving and underachieving student writers. To date, a huge scholarship has been devoted to it. SRSD-related activities included scholarly articles, monographs, books, and conferences. As to the second approach, academic research has focused on the role of revision in enhancing the writing quality of the student writer. This approach draws on the revision practices of expert writers that can be transferred to novice writers through emulation.

Second, research findings reveal that emulation could significantly improve the student’s performance in language skills, as evidenced by Kory-Westlund and Breazeal (2019). This study explored the relationship between the pre-school children’s learning, rapport, and emulation of the robot’s language. The study findings revealed that the participants who emulated the robot’s language scored higher on the vocabulary test. What is more, most SRSD-related studies confirmed the vital role played by emulation in enhancing the students’ writing (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2003).

Third, emulation might not involve any learning activity to be reduced to imitation. For example, it was argued above that verbal actions, and oral expressions make teachers appear more or less credible, the subject more or less interesting the learning environment more or less secure. It is the creation of a friendly educational environment that is conducive to learning that is the crux of the matter. Such an environment can inspire the students to be optimistic about writing, which could ultimately assist them in being good student writers.

**Methods**

It is important to point out that the main objective of this paper was to explore the educational opportunities of emulation in a writing classroom at Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia. Because the writing course was offered by the English department at Community college, permissioned was requested from the College administration to use course as a source for the study data. Upon the College approval the students were informed that an intervention would be integrated into the
official activities of the course with the prime aim of helping them to overcome some of their writing challenges. Because all the students participated in the course activities, there was no need for sampling procedures for the subsequent study.

**Participants**

The study participants were 18 Community College (CC) enrollees at Majmaah University for the academic years 2019/2020. They were enrolled in the transitional English program, which lasts for four terms to qualify them for enrolment in the College of Education to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in English. The transitional program introduces the students to the basics of the four syllabus components: linguistics, literature, translation, and English language skills. It is well known that Community College is the last resort for students. That is, only after failure to secure enrolment in the College of Education that students end up in CC. Generally speaking, CC students were believed to lack motivation to pursue higher education, as evidenced by their indifference to classes, mid-term exams, and procrastination behavior, to mention but a few. On the other hand, they voiced interest in satisfactory attendance records, high coursework scores, final exam grades, etc. even though they had not worked hard to achieve these goals. They repeatedly submitted complaints to CC administration against faculty who tend to apply disciplinary measures in the classes. At the time of the intervention, the participants were enrolled in the fourth level course ENG312: Short Essay, where they studied five types of essay: descriptive essay, narrative essay, opinion essay, comparison and contrast essay, and cause and effect essay. The reason for including male students only was that the Saudi academic system does not allow co-education at all educational levels. Thus, there were separate campuses for male and female students at Majmaah University. On average, the students join the university at age eighteen. By the time they enrolled for the intervention-related course, they turned 19.

**Research Instruments**

A two-part intervention was conducted to motivate the students to study hard so that they could reach the threshold level required by the Department of English at the College of education, into which they would move after successful completion of the transitional program in the manner described in the previous section. The participants were required to develop their pre-college English into college-level knowledge and skills in the four components of the English syllabus to be able to embark on more rigorous syllabus components at the College of Education at the beginning of the fifth level. The intervention included orientation and revision, which had, over the time, lent themselves effectively to the creation of interactive learning environments. The first intervention was a quality assurance requirement that students should be thoroughly informed about the courses in the first week of the term. Apart from the course information as coded in the course file, several success stories were shared with the students. For example, in the writing classes, the students were happy to know that two of the best-known world-writing researchers i.e. Professor John Swales and Professor Ken Hyland, had started their successful careers in the MENA region i.e., Sudan and Saudi Arabia, respectively. The students became so enthusiastic about the information that a class member declared he “would be Ken Hyland or John Swales of Saudi Arabia.” Another success story came from a conference presenter in Malaysia, who reported that her Saudi students were in the top 5% of their classes at Putra University Language Center. These success stories were highly needed to help these underachieving students to redeem themselves and raise their hopes so that they could achieve similar educational goals.
Another emulative intervention in the writing classes was revision. The students were introduced to revision as a powerful tool that characterized the writing of achieving students and expert scholars. It involved not only the elimination of local or surface errors of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics in their completed texts but also the attention given to the global features of the text in a recursive manner. It consisted of a series of activities where “details are added, dropped, substituted, or reordered according to their sense of what essay needs for emphasis and proportion” (Sommers, 1980, p. 385). The students were challenged that only well revised, error-free task answers could receive total or high scores. Overall, both instruments produced various types of qualitative data. On the one hand, the orientation produced several positive reactions on the parts of the participants, as will be detailed in the results section.

Research Procedures

The emulative interventions were flexible and significantly facilitated by educational technology and social media. These e-platforms allowed the participants to communicate with the instructor 24/7. Because most of the writing activities were conducted on the University learning management system, the course settings for deadlines were frequently modified to allow the students to produce more enhanced drafts based on the instructor’s comments using the track changes feature.

Results

Two types of results were obtained: demonstration of modeled behavior and responses to interview questions about the use of revision in improving their writing drafts. As to the first type, the participants admired the success stories of Professor John Swales and Ken Hyland. They started following their pages on various digital repositories, including Wikipedia, Researchgate, Google Scholar, and YouTube. The participants were particularly impressed by the plenary presentations given by these scholars at international conferences. This led them to seek help in the use of PowerPoint so that they could provide classroom presentations, particularly in courses that require reading and writing, such as “Introduction to Linguistics,” “English Phonetics,” and “Morphology and Syntax.” They were challenged to this task provided that they should speak for twenty minutes, which they did so marvelously. One of the participants was so enthusiastic about the prosperous career of these two scholars to declare that he would be the future “John Swales or Ken Hyland of Saudi Arabia.” The success stories of Saudi students at Putra University encouraged some participants to travel to Malaysia to enroll in one of the English language centers so that they could give professional presentations or write essays of good quality. A third example of acquisition of modeled behavior is the choice to produce multiple drafts of the same writing task as informed by the revision literature. Most participants showed interest in submitting up to three revised drafts based on the comments, using track changes. Although the participants’ motive was primarily instrumental in getting higher scores, they were able to revise to produce better writing quality.

Second, a follow-up discussion was conducted in the classroom to elicit data about the students’ perception of the revision guidelines to enhance the quality of their writing. The discussion centered on two topics: instructional transparency and confidence. Most frequent responses regarding instructional transparency are listed in table 1:
Table 1. Participants’ perception of the intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional transparency</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It was a new experience. Nobody knew how instructors assess our writing before this course. The use of rubrics in assessment is persuasive.</td>
<td>• I’m sure that I’m now more confident in my writing because I can revise my paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It was the first time to know why I missed many marks. If we were taught how to revise, our writing would have improved.</td>
<td>• I used to avoid writing tasks because I wasn’t sure about how good it is. This course helped me to revise well before submitting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Before applying quality assurance standards to teaching, we could not know how teachers assessed our performance.</td>
<td>• Writing many drafts of the same tasks made me more confident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The use of rubrics helped us to ask whatever questions we had about the course.</td>
<td>• I’m no longer afraid of writing. I feel very confident in doing all the tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is the first time that we felt mutual respect with our writing teachers.</td>
<td>• I agree with my friends we are no longer afraid of writing courses. I hope all other writing instructors teach us in the same way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Open discussion of rubrics helped me become independent, although I still need help from teachers and colleagues.</td>
<td>• I have extreme confidence in dealing with all writing tasks because I have the chances to write many times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Because the data was qualitative, narrative analysis was the most appropriate method for documenting the participants’ feedback regarding the usefulness of the intervention. As shown in the previous section, a general discussion was conducted in the classroom to know the students perception of the “emulative intervention”, which was followed by interview questions that the participants answered in writing. Data analysis positively answered both research questions. That is, the first research question enquired about the educational opportunities that emulation could bring in the classroom to enhance the participants’ writing. The data reported in the previous section shows that the participants were highly receptive of the ideas included in the intervention. Particularly, the participants showed positive attitude towards emulation as a writing strategy. As to the second research question, table 1 informs that the participants were receptive of the revision strategies both as a sign of instructional transparency and a source of writing confidence.

The overall results confirm the claim that emulative interventions can positively affect the perception and the behavior of underachieving Saudi students enrolled in writing classes at Majmaah University. Further support for this comes from the SLT hypothesis that “we were born into life-long dependence on each other, and the will to evolve derives from a fundamental need to be part of a community ...” (Kindeberg, 2013, p. 103). Both interventions produced data that attest to the relevance of this SLT premise. In practice, inspired by the success stories told and retold in the classroom, the participants not only demonstrated positive attitudes toward writing but also showcased their competence in applying strategies characteristic of the writing of expert writers and achieving students to their writing. These findings indicate that writing instructors cannot just commit themselves to the course description as detailed in the syllabus to complete the
course objectives/learning outcomes, e.g., “use appropriate argument to support a claim.” In other words, extra efforts are needed to integrate innovative interventions into mainstream teaching to engage underachieving students in classroom activities and thus provide them with rich opportunities to enhance their writing.

A basic question to consider in this connection is how do low-motivated underachieving students end up showcasing behaviors originally associated with expert writers and achieving students? In an attempt to answer this question, there are two factors that caused Saudi academia to be conducive to academic success among under-achieving students per se. First, as of 2014, e-learning has become an integral part of traditional education. The MU Learning Management System (technically known as Desire 2 Learn) has considerably facilitated academic communication between the students and the faculty; thus, it has dramatically improved teacher-student relation that was once confined to the traditional classroom. The situation has provided rich opportunities for the teaching and learning processes. The success stories recounted by teachers became credible and replicable by the students. What is more, teachers played emulative roles by sharing their publication lists, citation records, and conference presentations that remarkably motivated the students to emulate them in future. Second, the last decade witnessed the introduction of quality assurance standards into Saudi academia. A most daunting quality assurance task for the faculty was to base teaching and assessment of the student’s performance on a set of learning outcomes. However, success in performing this task was subject to a rigorous verification process. Because the test to verify the learning outcomes primarily related to the students’ examination results, it became necessary for faculty to apply additional instructional interventions to guarantee results that could pass the verification test. In the present intervention, emulation of the behavior of inspirational scholars helped to boost the morale of struggling student writers.

Locally, the study results of the study are consistent with the results of Ezza (2013). Although this study was conducted ten years later, it surprisingly produced corresponding qualitative data. That is, while a participant in Ezza (2013) declared that he would be the future “Paul Matsuda” of Saudi, a present study participant wished to be John Swales or Ken Hyland of Saudi Arabia. This similarity is attributed to the fact the same intervention (i.e., orientation) was replicated ten years later, where reference was made to the same writing scholars: Professor John Swales, Professor Ken Hyland, and Professor Paul Matsuda. The findings of this study were also consistent with Ezza et al. (2019). Participants in both studies showed positive attitudes towards revision and managed to free themselves of writing fears because of the rubrics they used to revise their work. Globally, it was shown in the literature section that students who emulated the robot’s language scored higher on the vocabulary test (Kory-Westlund & Breazeal, 2019). This study focuses on the improvement of the participants, while the current study explores the possibility of motivating the students to write to the satisfaction of their instructors. However, Kory-Westlund and Breazeal (2019) can still provide strong support for the assumption that emulation has an educational role to play.

Conclusion
This study has been an attempt to report a classroom experience applied at Community College at Majmaah University to motivate underachieving students to improve the academic
behavior of the students included in the study. Thus, the study drew on the SLT premises to guide successful classroom practices. It is necessary to point out in this connection that it is the plan of this study to enhance the academic performance of the students. Instead, it attempted to change their educational behavior by helping them to have a positive attitude towards learning so that they ultimately write to the satisfaction of their writing professors. There arose a need for extended orientation sessions where multiple success stories were recounted to prove to the students that everyone has similar opportunities to succeed academically. Fortunately, most of the students were receptive to new ideas, which they richly integrated into their repertoire of learning strategies. Further research is needed to decide if the participants have improved their composing skills based on their new (positive) approach to writing. At the same time, it is true that the transitional program in the Community College was closed in the same academic year (2018/2019), its findings can still be integrated into teaching and research in similar programs in the MENA region.

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Motivational Impact of Emulation in a Saudi Writing Classroom

Almudibry


Sommers, N. (1980a). Intentions and Revision. *Journal of Basic Writing, 3*(3), 41-49.DOI: 10.37514/JBW-J.1981.3.3.05


Chinese Undergraduate Students’ Language Learning Strategy Use in Flipped English Learning and its Relationships to Gender and Proficiency

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to examine Chinese undergraduate students’ language learning strategy use in flipped English learning and the effect of gender and language proficiency on strategy use. It aimed to enrich the research on language learning strategies as well as the flipped classroom and render implications to EFL instructors on developing students’ language learning strategy use in flipped English learning. Research questions in this study revolved around identifying the most and least frequently used language learning strategies in Chinese undergraduate students’ flipped English learning, and the influence of gender as well as language proficiency on the frequency of students’ strategy use. In this study, the researchers employed random sampling to select 109 students enrolled in the flipped English course for non-English majors at H University in China. Oxford’s (1990) Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) was modified for a flipped classroom context and employed to collect data. T-tests and ANOVAs were used to analyze the data. The results revealed that participants employed language learning strategies with medium frequency in flipped English learning. While they employed social strategies the most frequently, they used metacognitive strategies the least frequently. Furthermore, the male and female participants were not significantly different in their strategy use. However, there was a significant difference in strategy use in relation to English language proficiency in that high proficiency students employed strategies more frequently than low proficiency students. Pedagogical implications are provided.

Keywords: Chinese Undergraduate Students, English language proficiency, flipped classroom, gender, language learning strategy

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Introduction

In the past few decades, the focus of research on the acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has shifted from teaching methodology to learners because of the increasingly common recognition that learners are at the center of learning (Noormohamadi, 2009). Accordingly, a growing number of researchers have examined individual factors related to language learning (Challob, 2021; Degani & Goldberg, 2019). Of these factors, Language Learning Strategy (LLS) has been explored widely and found to be critical to language learning success (Becirovic, Brdarevic-Celjo, & Polz, 2021; Oxford, 1990, 2011; Vitta & Woollock, 2019). For years, language learning strategies have aroused the concern of several instructors and researchers. However, most of them have concentrated on language learners’ strategy use in traditional classroom settings. A paucity of research has investigated LLSs in flipped classroom settings, especially in China.

In China, EFL is a compulsory subject at all universities. University English teaching in China has traditionally been teacher-centered and lecture-based, which is ineffective in promoting learners’ English language learning (Huang, 2022). In response to the problem, the Chinese Ministry of Education asked specialists to design the Guidelines on University English Teaching. These guidelines recommend that universities employ the flipped classroom teaching mode in English teaching to create flexible learning environments and student-centered instruction (Wu, 2021). The flipped classroom is the result of fusing technology and education. Researchers found it very effective in developing language learners’ academic achievements (Masadeh, 2021; Webb & Doman, 2020). Abeysekera and Dawson (2014) noted that the flipped classroom has acquired worldwide popularity among EFL educators since 2011. However, despite its considerable popularity, very few studies have been conducted (Filiz & Benzet, 2018). Cognitive factors, such as learning strategies in flipped classroom learning, in particular, have rarely been explored.

Accordingly, the present study focused on the use of LLSs among Chinese undergraduate students in their flipped English learning, seeking to identify the most and least frequently used LLSs in students’ flipped English learning, and the influence of gender, as well as language proficiency on the frequency of students’ LLS use. By fulfilling the above research objectives, this study would enrich the research on LLSs as well as the flipped classroom and render implications to EFL instructors on developing students’ LLS use in flipped English learning. The research questions of this study are as follows:

1) What are the most and least frequently used LLSs in Chinese undergraduate students’ flipped English learning?
2) How does gender affect the frequency of LLS use among Chinese undergraduate students in flipped English learning?
3) How does English language proficiency affect the frequency of LLS use among Chinese undergraduate students in flipped English learning?

This paper will first review the studies on LLSs and the flipped classroom, which is followed by the introduction of the methodology concerning the participants, instruments, research procedure, and data analysis of this study. Next, later sections on the research results, discussion, conclusion, and implications will be presented.
Literature Review

Language Learning Strategy

Language Learning Strategy (LLS) is an influential factor in foreign language acquisition. As Oxford (2003) stated, LLS is a vital factor that helps figure out how and how well a foreign language is learned. For years, LLSs have been explored by many researchers (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2021; Damanik, 2022; Oxford, 1990, 2003). However, as Jaekel (2020) stated, the concept of LLSs has not been defined uniformly. No consensus has been reached as to whether learning strategies are mental factors related to thoughts or behaviors. Despite the disagreements, researchers have widely agreed that LLSs are employed deliberately to realize learning goals (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2021; Oxford, 2011). The intentionality of LLSs is more evidently reflected in Oxford’s (2011) definition, which describes LLSs as language learners’ attempts to purposefully and consciously deploy efforts to regulate their language learning. This definition depicts a comprehensive view of the nature of LLSs.

In addition to the definition, Oxford (1990) also worked out the classification of LLSs, categorizing LLSs into two groups, direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies exert a direct influence on language learning and comprise memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies (Oxford, 1990). Memory strategies are deployed to store new knowledge. Cognitive strategies are employed to help learners comprehend and produce language. Compensation strategies enable learners to overcome limitations in knowledge while using the new language. On the contrary, indirect strategies exert an indirect impact on language learning and consist of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (Oxford, 1990). Metacognitive strategies are used to self-manage language acquisition. Affective strategies are deployed for controlling learners’ emotions as well as attitudes. Social strategies allow learners to learn by interacting with others. By employing the taxonomy of LLSs, Oxford (1990) constructed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a questionnaire on language learners’ LLS use.

Oxford’s (1990) classification of LLSs and her SILL are well-recognized and commonly adopted by researchers (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2021; Damanik, 2022; Jaekel, 2020). In China, Oxford’s (1990) theory has been widely applied in the study of LLSs use in the conventional EFL learning setting (Jiao & Simon, 2022; Zhen, 2018; Zhou & Intaraprasert, 2015a). Zhen (2018) employed SILL to investigate the LLS use among 105 Chinese college students, finding that they deployed LLSs at a medium level, with compensation strategies used the most frequently, and affective strategies used the least frequently. Jiao and Simon (2022) applied Oxford’s theory to examine the LLS use of 269 Chinese EFL learners and achieved similar research findings.

Oxford’s (1990) theory has also been used in studies on the correlation between LLS use and certain individual factors, including gender and language proficiency, which have been considered decisive in learners’ use of LLS (Bećirović et al., 2021; Montero-SaizAja, 2021). Most research on the influence of gender on LLS use has revealed significant differences in strategy use between female and male language learners (Bećirović et al., 2021; Jiao & Simon, 2022; Zhou & Intaraprasert, 2015a). For example, Xue (2015), in her study on 102 Chinese postgraduate students’ LLS use, revealed that female learners exhibited a much more frequent and wider range of strategy use. Jiao and Simon’s (2022) study on Chinese EFL learners’ LLS use showed a
significant difference in strategy use in relation to gender, with female learners outperforming male learners in the frequency of strategy use.

Furthermore, many studies on the impact of language proficiency on LLSs use reported that LLS use of language learners with different language proficiency levels has varied: more proficient learners are superior to less proficient learners in the frequency and range of strategy use (Alrashidi, 2022; Amjusfa, Yasin, & Muthalib, 2021; Zou & Supinda, 2022). For example, Zhou and Intaraprasert (2015b) investigated the LLS use of 836 college students from six normal universities in China and found that students with high English proficiency employed the overall LLSs significantly more frequently than their peers with low proficiency. Hou’s (2018) study on the role of LLSs in Chinese college students’ English language learning also revealed that more proficient English learners employed much more LLSs than less proficient ones.

As noted, being a vital factor determining language learners’ success, LLS has been widely studied from different facets, and a considerable number of valuable research findings have been reported. However, while most of these previous studies were carried out in a conventional classroom language learning context, few studies have been conducted in the flipped classroom context. Pawlak and Oxford (2018) pointed out that given the increasingly important role that technology plays in language learning, future studies must explore LLSs in technology-assisted language learning. Accordingly, this study, which examined LLS use among Chinese EFL learners in their flipped English learning, may be regarded as significant.

**Flipped Classroom**

In the past decade, flipped classroom, the innovative teaching and learning mode has emerged from the combination of technology and education. Concerning the connotation of the flipped classroom, scholars have not come to a consensus and have presented different interpretations. Bergmann and Sams (2012) considered the flipped classroom to be the teaching in which the tasks that are conventionally finished as the assignment out of class are now dealt with in class, and the activities that are conventionally arranged in class are now performed out of class. They further revealed the flipped classroom’s inversion nature and demonstrated its superiority over conventional teaching and learning by switching in-class information transmission time with out-of-class practice time (Hwang, Lai, & Wang, 2015). However, Bergmann and Sams’ (2012) definition does not specify the relationship between out-of-class learning (or pre-class learning) and in-class learning. As Brame (2013) asserted, the flipped classroom is an ideology that the pre-class learning conducted by exposing learners to teaching content prepares the learners for the in-class active and authentic experiences. Brame’s definition reveals that, in a flipped classroom, learners’ pre-class content learning is the pre-condition for their in-class experiential learning. This definition does not further present the characteristics of learning activities usually arranged in the pre-class and in-class learning sessions. However, this is made clear by Bishop and Verleger (2013), who stated that the flipped classroom includes two phases, out-of-class self-learning assisted by computer and in-class collaborative learning in groups. In a flipped class, students assume the responsibility of out-of-class learning as independent learners through activities such as watching teaching videos and visiting the course website (Masadeh, 2021). In class, teachers help create an interactive environment in which students work in groups and apply what they have learned before class to complete certain tasks (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Although
researchers have not reached an agreement on the definition of the flipped classroom, all the previous interpretations thereof have shed light on its characteristics.

In comparison to conventional classroom instruction, the flipped classroom is characterized first by its emphasis on learners’ self-directed learning (Wu & Ma, 2022). Long (2016) pointed out that in self-directed learning, the individual students take the initiative and the responsibility for their own learning. In flipped classrooms, learners are predominantly at the center of learning (Masadeh, 2021). They are expected to self-manage their learning, especially in the pre-class learning phase, by setting learning objectives, devising plans, monitoring their learning process, and reflecting on their learning (Wanner & Palmer, 2015). In addition to self-directed learning, the stress on interactive learning is the second important feature of the flipped classroom (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). In the in-class learning phase, teachers help create an interactive environment in which students work in groups and conduct learning by collaborating to solve problems and produce outcomes (Wanner & Palmer, 2015). The third characteristic that distinguishes the flipped classroom from conventional learning is the former’s adoption of education technology which is a crucial contributory factor to the construction of the pre-class learning environment (Masadeh, 2021). When assisted by education technology, knowledge is absorbed not in a physical classroom but in a virtual learning platform, which “helps to free up class time for more active discussions and tasks” (Webb & Doman, 2020, p. 245).

During the past decade, the flipped classroom has been widely embedded in teaching practice and studied in a variety of disciplines. In the study of foreign language acquisition, as Filiz and Benzet’s (2018) summary of related literature shows, the flipped classroom was not given attention until 2014. A majority of studies have since focused on the flipped classroom’s effects on learners’ academic performance and gains in flipped learning (Masadeh, 2021; Wahib & Tamer, 2021; Webb & Doman, 2020). Only a few studies concentrated on learners’ individual characteristics in flipped learning (Abdullah, Hussin, & Ismail, 2020; Ghufron & Nurdianingsih, 2019). For example, Challob (2021) investigated a group of Iranian college students’ motivation in flipped English writing learning. Fard, Shahrokhi and Talebinejad (2021) explored ESP students’ attitudes toward flipped English vocabulary learning. Among these previous studies on individual characteristics in flipped language learning, no study focused on LLS, the critical individual factor in language learning. Although massive studies have been conducted in the conventional language learning setting on LLS use and its relationship with individual factors, such as gender and language proficiency, given the significant discrepancy between conventional and flipped learning settings, language learners’ LLS use and its relationship with gender as well as proficiency might have distinctive features in flipped language learning. As Pawlak and Oxford (2018) stated, language learners’ strategy use pattern in the technology-assisted learning environment might be significantly different from that in the traditional learning environment. Given this, the present study investigated LLS use of a group of flipped EFL learners in a Chinese university to figure out the distinctive features of LLS use and the impact of gender and proficiency in the flipped learning setting.

Methodology
This study aims to investigate Chinese undergraduate students’ use of LLSs in their flipped EFL learning and to reveal the influence of gender as well as language proficiency on students’
strategy use frequency in a flipped classroom. To fulfill the objectives, a quantitative questionnaire survey was conducted to collect data. The quantitative research design was widely used in studies on LLS use and its relationship with gender and proficiency (Alrashidi, 2022; Damanik, 2022; Montero-SaizAja, 2021). This design is also suitable to achieve the present study’s aim because it enables to explore means of variables and differences between means of different gender or proficiency groups, and thereby helps reveal the frequency of participants’ LLS use and the differences of LLS use frequency related to gender as well as proficiency.

Participants
In this study, the participants were a group of freshmen who enrolled in the flipped English course at H University in China. H University is a multi-disciplinary comprehensive university. It set up the program of flipped English teaching in 2014, and it is among the pioneers in flipped English teaching practice at the university level in China. Each year, almost 500 freshmen at HFU enroll in the flipped English course. In this study, 109 freshmen were selected through systematic random sampling as the participants of the questionnaire investigation. According to Yount (2006), the minimum sample size of a small population (101-1000) is 10% of the population. Therefore, the minimum sample size of this study was supposed to be 50. However, to enhance the richness of the data collected, 109 was determined to be the sample size in this study. Among the participants, there were 32 male and 77 female students. The participants’ English language proficiency was measured by the scores of their College Entrance English Examination (CEEE), which is the nationwide examination administered by the Chinese Education Ministry to the Chinese students who apply for higher education. Based on the participants’ CEEE results, they were classified into three different English language proficiency level groups, namely, a high proficiency group (21 students), an intermediate proficiency group (68 students), and a low proficiency group (20 students).

Research Instrument
The instrument employed to collect data in this study was the Questionnaire of Language Learning Strategy in Flipped Classroom, which was created by adapting Oxford’s (1990) SILL (version 7.0). SILL has been widely used for years and is well-recognized as a high-standard instrument to examine foreign/second language learners’ LLS use. Its validity and reliability have been endorsed by many studies (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2021; Damanik, 2022). These studies revealed that, when employing Cronbach’s alpha, SILL’s general reliability is above .9, even when translated into other languages.

SILL includes 50 items that belong to six constructs: Memory Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Compensation Strategies, Metacognitive Strategies, Affective Strategies, and Social Strategies (Oxford 1990). These six constructs were adopted in the new questionnaire in this study. To make the questionnaire more applicable to the study in a flipped classroom context, some items in SILL which were not in accordance with the characteristics of flipped classroom learning were modified. For instance, the original item six in SILL, “I use flashcards to remember new English words”, was replaced by “I use English vocabulary learning APPs to remember new English words” because, in flipped learning, technological English learning tools rather than flashcards are usually used to assist in remembering new words. In this study, all the adaptions of the items were...
guided by Oxford’s (1990) definition and illustration of the six categories of LLSs, and the literature on flipped language learning.

After the adaption, a preliminary new questionnaire was produced. It comprises two sections. Section one includes questions on the respondents’ personal information. Section two, like SILL, is the six-construct component scale with 50 items, adopting the five-point Likert Scale, with each item scored from 1 to 5. A higher total score indicates more frequent use of LLSs (Oxford, 1990). This study adopted Oxford’s (1990) explanation of the score of SILL. A range of average score of 3.5-5 is taken as high frequency of strategy use, 2.5-3.4 medium use, and 1.0-2.4 as low frequency of use. The new questionnaire was translated into Chinese to avoid misunderstanding by the respondents.

After the new questionnaire had been constructed, a pilot study involving 43 participants was carried out. In the pilot study, while answering the new questionnaire, the participants were asked to note down and report any unclear expressions and problematic items in the questionnaire, disagreeable procedures, and unpleasant format or appearance of the questionnaire. Three specialists were also invited to evaluate the questionnaire. Following the participants’ and specialists’ feedback, the questionnaire was further modified to make it more suitable for collecting the data on the research questions, thereby ensuring the study’s validity. SPSS 25 was used to perform Cronbach’s alpha coefficient test. The result showed that the Cronbach’s alphas for the new questionnaire were 0.92, thus indicating its reliability.

**Research Procedure**

This study was carried out in a flipped English course in which students conducted their EFL learning in two phases sequentially, the pre-class online learning phase stressing self-directed content learning and the in-class interactive learning phase focusing on productive use of absorbed knowledge in collaborative group work, problem-solving activities, project work and so on. After students had taken a 12-week flipped English course, the participants of this study completed the questionnaire adapted from Oxford’ (1990) SILL online with their mobile phones in the researcher’s presence in the classroom. Before completing the questionnaire, the participants were given necessary instructions and assured of the confidentiality of their personal information. On average, the respondents took 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Once data were collected with the questionnaire, they were processed and analyzed.

**Data Analysis**

The questionnaire data were processed with SPSS 25. The mean score for each type of LLSs was calculated to measure the frequency of participants using various LLSs. The mean score for all the strategies was also calculated to reveal the overall tendency of using LLS. Subsequently, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to identify whether male and female students in flipped EFL learning were significantly different in using LLS. Finally, a one-way ANOVA was carried out to compare the LLS use of flipped EFL learners in the high, intermediate, and low English language proficiency groups.
Results

Overall Use of Strategies

The participants’ overall use of LLSs and their use of the six different categories of LLSs were shown in Table One.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on the overall use of LLSs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table One indicates that the participants’ overall strategy use varied from 2 to 4.08, and the mean score was 2.95, suggesting that participants used LLSs at a medium level in their flipped EFL learning. Of the six categories of LLSs, the mean score of social strategies (M = 3.22) ranked the highest. It was followed by compensation Strategies (M = 3.10), memory strategies (M = 2.99), affective Strategies (M = 2.97), and cognitive Strategies (M = 2.90). Metacognitive strategies had the lowest mean score (M = 2.76). The finding suggested that among the six categories of LLSs, social strategies were the most frequently employed and metacognitive strategies were the least frequently employed.

In addition to participants’ overall use of LLSs, the influence of gender on the frequency of participants’ LLS use was explored below.

Use of Strategies by Gender

To examine the influence of gender on participants’ LLS use frequency, an independent t-test was applied to figure out whether there existed any differences between male and female participants’ LLS use frequency. The result of the independent t-test was summarized in Table Two.

Table 2: Summary of statistics of LLS use in terms of gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Male Group</th>
<th>Female Group</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Two shows that female and male participants’ overall strategy use did not vary significantly (p > 0.05), and the mean score of females (Mean = 2.96) participants’ overall use of strategies was just slightly higher than that of the male participants (Mean = 2.91). Concerning the use of each
category of LLSs, similarly, no significant gender difference was identified (p > 0.05). The mean scores of female and male participants’ uses of each category of LLSs were close to each other. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in LLS use in relation to gender.

After the analysis of the role played by gender in participants’ LLS use, the impact of English language proficiency was analyzed in the next section.

Use of Strategies by English Language Proficiency
To figure out the influence of English language proficiency on participants’ LLSs use frequency, a one-way ANOVA was performed to examine if participants from different proficiency groups varied considerably in their LLS use. The employment of the LLS among participants in the three English proficiency level groups was displayed in Table Three.

Table 3: Summary of statistics of LLS use in terms of English language proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>High (N=21)</th>
<th>Intermediate (N=68)</th>
<th>Low (N=20)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>.44</td>
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<td>.58</td>
<td>3.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>15.923</td>
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</table>

As presented in Table Three, the one-way ANOVA results revealed significant differences in the employment of LLS among participants in high, intermediate, and low proficiency level groups (p < 0.05). With regards to the six different categories of LLSs, while the use of memory strategies (p < 0.05), cognitive strategies (p < 0.05), compensation strategies (p < 0.05) and metacognitive strategies (p < 0.05) differed significantly among the participants from different proficiency groups, the use of affective strategies (p > 0.05) and social strategies (p > 0.05) were not significantly different. The mean scores of the overall strategy use of those in high (M = 3.21), intermediate (M = 2.96), and low (M = 2.62) proficiency groups decreased gradually. The participants in the high proficiency group (M = 3.33, M = 3.23, M = 3.35, M = 3.07, M = 3.15, M = 3.18) demonstrated a higher frequency in using all the different categories of LLSs, compared with the participants in the low proficiency group (M = 2.68, M = 2.55, M = 2.78, M = 2.41, M = 2.7, M = 2.95). The findings indicated that there existed significant differences in LLS use in relation to English language proficiency with more proficient students employing LLSs more frequently.

Discussion
The statistic analysis in the previous section reveals a series of findings related to the three research questions in this study.
**RQ One: What are the most and least frequently used LLSs in Chinese undergraduate students' flipped English learning?**

In this study, social strategies were employed more frequently than other categories of LLSs and thus were the most preferred strategies. This is inconsistent with the results of those studies on Chinese undergraduate students’ strategy use in a traditional learning setting, which presented that compensation strategies were deployed more frequently (Jiao & Simon, 2022; Zhen, 2018). The high use of social strategies in this study may result from the frequent interaction in flipped learning. In the flipped classroom, based on pre-class content learning, most in-class time is spent on various interactive and collaborative activities (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020), which considerably increases the chances for communication, thus promoting students’ use of social strategies.

This study showed that the participants employed metacognitive strategies the least frequently. This is incompatible with those studies on Chinese undergraduate students’ strategy use in a traditional learning setting, which reported that affective strategies were deployed the least (Jiao & Simon, 2022, Zhen, 2018). The participants’ inadequate use of metacognitive strategies in this study may be related to Chinese undergraduate students’ lower competency in self-managing their EFL learning and flipped learning’s strong demands for learners’ self-management. In China, students have typically learned English for ten years in teacher-centered and lecture-based learning contexts before they attend university. Influenced by ten years of passive knowledge-receiving learning experiences, first-year students at university are not accustomed to the highly self-managed learning in the flipped classroom, which leads to the low use of metacognitive strategies concerning arranging, planning, and evaluating one’s own language learning as independent learners.

**RQ Two: How does gender affect the frequency of LLS use among Chinese undergraduate students in flipped English learning?**

The study showed no significant divergences in Chinese undergraduate students’ LLS use in relation to gender in their flipped EFL learning. The LLS use frequencies of female and male participants were close to each other, which indicated that the influence of gender was relatively small. This result does not concur with the majority of studies on LLSs in a traditional learning context in China, which reported that female and male language learners varied considerably in strategy use, with the former exhibiting a more frequent and wider range of strategy use (Jiao & Simon, 2022; Xue, 2015). The similarity of male and female learners’ strategy use in this study may be related to the fact that although female learners are reported to be more talented in employing strategies to learn a new language (Oxford & Ehrman, 1993), male learners also have their own advantages in flipped language learning. Research has shown that male learners are more interested in and better at learning that is more creative and exciting (Prokop, 1989). In the flipped classroom, the pre-class self-directed learning, the in-class interactive learning, and the application of technology make the learning mode completely different from that in the conventional learning environment, which results in a more refreshing, exciting, and creative learning experience for learners. Therefore, male learners might be more active in flipped learning and better at using strategies in the flipped classroom, which helps counteract female learners’ innate advantage in language learning and strategy use.
**RQ Three: How does English language proficiency affect the frequency of LLS use among Chinese undergraduate students in flipped English learning?**

This study showed significant differences in Chinese undergraduate students’ LLS use regarding their English proficiency level in flipped EFL learning. Students with high language proficiency had much more frequent employment of LLS than students with low proficiency. These findings indicated that language proficiency exerted an intense influence on students’ LLS use frequency. This coincides with the studies on LLS use in a traditional learning setting in China, which reported that language proficiency has a significant effect on learners’ strategy use, with the more proficient students outperforming the less proficient ones in the frequency and range of strategy use (Hou, 2018; Zhou & Intaraprasert, 2015b).

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the LLS use and its relationship with gender as well as English language proficiency in Chinese undergraduate students’ EFL flipped learning. The findings indicated that in flipped EFL learning, Chinese undergraduate students are medium strategy users and use different categories of LLSs with varying frequencies. While social strategies were used the most frequently, metacognitive strategies were employed the least, despite their importance to students’ self-directed learning in flipped context. The current study also revealed that English proficiency plays a significant role in Chinese undergraduate students’ LLS use in their EFL flipped learning, with more proficient EFL learners using LLSs much more frequently than less proficient learners. However, the influence of gender is insignificant.

**Implications**

This study provides certain implications for the EFL pedagogy in the flipped classroom. Firstly, to assist Chinese undergraduates in becoming more competent strategy users in flipped EFL learning, it is of significance to integrate LLS instruction and training into a regular EFL flipped class. The flipped classroom emphasizes self-directed, interactive, and technology-assisted learning, making it significantly different from the traditional learning mode. To help students adapt to and successfully conduct flipped EFL learning, teachers can embed LLS instruction and training in self-directed, interactive, technology-assisted learning activities in the flipped class, leading students to learn and practice the skills of appropriately selecting and employing LLSs in these typical flipped EFL learning activities, and thereby develop students’ ability to use strategies effectively. In this process, particular attention should be paid to the instruction and training of metacognitive strategies because Chinese undergraduate students tend to be less competent in deploying this category of strategies in their flipped EFL learning. Secondly, EFL teachers should attach importance to the impact of individual factors on students’ strategy use and take into account the individual differences when they design the LLS instruction and training. In particular, it is recommended that teachers vary the strategy training design in accordance with students’ English proficiency levels. As revealed in this study, high and low proficiency students differed in their LLS use. Accordingly, students with different proficiency levels may have different needs in relation to strategy instruction and training. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that teachers customize the strategy instruction and training objectives, methods, and evaluating systems to meet the particular needs of students with varying proficiency levels.
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References


Chinese Undergraduate Students’ Language Learning Strategy

Ma & Abdul Samat


Exploring the Effect of Instructional Scaffolding on Foundation Level Students’ Writing at the City University College of Ajman: A Case Study

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Abstract
The present research is a small-scale case study with a 15-week intervention aiming to identify lower intermediate language learners’ major writing challenges and explore the effect of instructional scaffolding on their writing skills and abilities. Scaffolding is central to the broader theories of constructivism and Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory. Nine Foundation Level students enrolled in an Intensive English Program at the City University College of Ajman, United Arab Emirates, participated in this study. This study is observational, descriptive, and interpretive. The researcher used three qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments: pre- and post-writing tests, a focus-group interview, and a student attitude questionnaire to triangulate and gain reliable, valid data. The findings revealed some major writing issues, including paucity of ideas, lack of grammatical and lexical knowledge, proper organization, and problems with spelling and punctuation. However, the pre-posttest results indicated improved students’ writing skills and abilities, mainly in task completion, paragraph organization, lexical range, and writing fluency. The study also finds that students need more time and practice to produce accurate and error-free essays. Accordingly, the researcher recommends engaging students in research-based strategies and activities in all writing phases to raise their awareness of grammatical and lexical mistakes, increase their learning and reflection, and boost their confidence.

Keywords: constructive feedback, interactive strategies, scaffolding, second language, language competence

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Introduction
Teaching writing to ESL students is challenging and complex. Many ESL students enrolled in the Intensive English Program (IEP101) at the college where the researcher teaches experience significant writing difficulties. They lacked the opportunity and support needed back in high school to produce good quality writing. Their poor writing skills prevented them from engaging in successful classroom writing, and they often felt frustrated when asked to write. These students need adequate support and preparation to help them write meaningfully and accurately in English. The literature indicates that effective second language (L2) writing should be cohesive, well structured, and adequately organized (Choi & Wong, 2018; Fareed et al., 2016; Piamsai, 2017; Spycher, 2017). In addition, many studies emphasize the effectiveness of instructional scaffolding in improving students’ writing. Scaffolding helps develop students’ cognitive, metacognitive, and affective competencies (Choi & Wong, 2018; Melrose et al., 2013; Piamsai, 2017; Walqui, 2006). Therefore, the present study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What writing challenges did the participating students experience?
2. What effect does instructional scaffolding have on student writing performance from their perspectives?

Review of the Literature
Common Writing Difficulties among ESL Learners
Most ESL students have trouble using correct sentence structures and writing coherent and cohesive paragraphs (Ahmed, 2010; Mohseni & Samadian, 2019). Ahmed (2010) explains that “producing a coherent piece of writing is an enormous challenge, especially in one’s second language” (p. 82). ESL learners have English spelling, punctuation, and capitalization issues, which often interfere with what the student intends to say (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Ahmed, 2010). Commenting on students’ poor punctuation, Adas and Bakir (2013) assert that “several ELLs with Arabic background struggle with punctuation since Arabic has few[er] limitations in the use of commas and periods than English” (p. 255). Furthermore, students’ lexical repertory is minimal and often overuses keywords (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Ahmed, 2010; Fareed et al., 2016). First language (L1) interference is another concern; many Arab learners of English tend to think in L1 instead of L2 when they write. This reliance on L1 often leads to confusion and makes their writing hard to read (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Ahmed, 2010). Fragments, run-ons, choppy sentences, clichés, and other sentence-level issues hinder their writing accuracy (Al Badi, 2015, Adas & Bakir, 2013; Piamsai, 2020). Al Badi (2015) and Fareed et al. (2016) single out two writing difficulties EFL students encounter in writing classes. These difficulties include low language ability levels, lack of information about the topic, confusion between spoken and written forms of English, and L1 interference.

Leveling up Student Writing through Instructional Scaffolding
Scaffolding is a teaching method rooted in Vygotsky's learning theory. Scaffolding means providing the necessary guidance and advice to students to improve their knowledge and abilities and approach the targeted mastery level. Once students' learning increases, the teacher should remove their support progressively (Choi & Wong, 2018; Melrose et al., 2013; Piamsai, 2020; Walqui, 2006). The term 'scaffolding' refers to the amount of learning students may register with the help or instruction provided by more capable others (Benko, 2012; Piamsai, 2020).
Scaffolding requires purposeful interaction with content and other people. When teachers tailor their support to students’ learning and understanding, the connection between their prior knowledge and the new knowledge is stored in their long-term memory (Walqui, 2006). Therefore, instructors should tailor effective scaffolding to meet learners’ needs and enhance their future independence (Benko, 2012; Spycher, 2017). Instructors should also provide scaffolding on-demand as students make headway in their learning and become more autonomous and less dependent on teachers (Walqui, 2006). Similarly, Gibbons (2002) defines instructional scaffolding as temporary, purposeful, and responsive support that helps students progress toward new abilities, concepts, or levels of comprehension.

**Benefits of Scaffolding**

The literature emphasizes the benefits of instructional scaffolding. Scaffolding enhances writing fluency and accuracy, fosters positive interaction and purposeful discussions between teachers and students, and allows constructive feedback from peers and instructors (Melrose et al., 2013; Piamsai, 2020; Spycher, 2017; Walqui, 2006). It also upgrades the quality of students’ writing and raises their awareness of how writing works (Spycher, 2017). To incorporate scaffolding in teaching, teachers should consider the following questions: What kind of activities can the students do independently? Which tasks can students complete with help but not on their own? Finally, what type of teacher, peer support, or guidance is required to help students acquire the needed competencies? (Melrose et al., 2013). Commenting on the vitality and the dynamic aspect of instructional scaffolding, Van de Pol et al. (2010) explain:

> Because scaffolding is such a dynamic intervention finely tuned to the learner’s ongoing progress, the support given by the teacher during scaffolding strongly depends upon the characteristics of the situation like the type of task (e.g., well-structured versus ill-structured) and the responses of the student. Therefore, scaffolding does never look the same in different situations and it is not a technique that can be applied in every situation in the same way (p. 272)

**Grounded Theories**

**Social Constructivism and Knowledge Construction**

The present study focuses on the connection between the core concepts of social constructivism and Vygotsky’s concept of learning as a social activity. According to the social perspective of constructivism, knowledge is constructed only when interaction occurs between individuals or groups within a community of practice (Richardson, 2003). Teachers negotiate meaning with learners in a constructivist classroom to help them construct knowledge. Depending on their abilities and learning needs, students actively engage with the topic by connecting the new material to prior knowledge, independently or with help from their instructors or peers.

**Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

Vygotsky’s (1978) understanding of knowledge construction is that knowledge is created collaboratively within a social group. ZPD means that a more competent learner assists a less competent one in a task or solving a problem. This assistance continues until the less competent student becomes more skilled at an activity previously completed in a group setting. Van Lier (2004) summarized different scaffolding sources in ZPD: assistance from more capable peers or adults, interaction with equal peers, less talented peers, and inner knowledge and experience.
Thus, the learner taps into four sources of scaffolding; from an expert, through collaborating and co-constructing knowledge with peers, assisting less capable peers in their ZPDs, and finally, working alone and relying on one’s inner resources (Walqui, 2006; Van Lier, 2004).

Models of Instructional Scaffolding
The mainstream literature suggests different approaches, frameworks, models, or strategies sustain learners’ performance in learning English as a second language.

Walqui’s (2006) pedagogical framework includes six types of instructional scaffolding: “modeling, bridging, contextualizing, schemata building, re-presenting text [,),] and developing metacognition” (p. 170). First, teachers model classroom tasks to increase understanding. Second, teachers activate students’ content knowledge by helping them connect new material to their real lives. Their next move consists in contextualizing the tasks in focus to make the academic language more accessible and engaging for learners. Fourth, teachers create conditions for students to connect meanings with knowledge and understanding. Finally, teachers engage students in meaningful language learning activities and instructional conversations. Teachers enhance learners’ autonomy at this stage by creating analogies and metaphors based on students’ experiences. Meantime, students are encouraged to self-monitor.

Integrative Framework
Van de Pol et al. (2010) highlight the five scaffolding intentions suggested by Tharp and Gallimore (1988): direction maintenance, structuring, freedom rate reduction, managing and controlling frustration, and a final intention labeled as “the six means” (Van de Pol et al., 2010, p. 276). The latter consists of feedback, hints, instruction, explanation, modeling, and questioning. Essentially, intention refers to what teachers scaffold, and ‘the means’ refers to how they conduct scaffolding. Van de Pol et al. (2010) assert, “Any combination of scaffolding means with scaffolding intention can be construed as a scaffolding strategy” (p. 277).

Scaffolding Strategies and Techniques
Writing skills have long been a sign of a learner’s ability to demonstrate grammatical and lexical fluency and accuracy (Choi & Wong, 2018). Numerous studies indicate that scaffolding is effective in L2 English writing classrooms for all ages and proficiency levels. The following are research-based strategies for implementing effective instructional scaffolding in the classroom.

Modeling as a Scaffolding Tool
Salisu and Ransom (2014) define modeling as “an instructional strategy in which the teacher demonstrates a new concept or approach to learning and students learn by observing” (p. 54). Modeling allows teachers to impart knowledge to students when they perform or model tasks that students observe. Developing cognitive and metacognitive competencies and skills requires opportunities for more practice until the learners achieve a higher level of competence and mastery in particular areas. In this fashion, Salisu and Ransom (2014) argue that skill mastery occurs when models provide “guidance, feedback, and social reinforcement during practice” (p. 55). Benko (2012) asserts, “Modeling is a concept often recommended in writing instruction,
but it is worth considering how demonstration, or the use of models, might best support student writers” (p. 296).

Content, Linguistic, and Structural Scaffolds
Choi and Wong (2018) distinguish three types of scaffolding in writing: content scaffolding, structural scaffolding, and linguistic scaffolding. Examples of content scaffolds include modeling class activities, discussing reading texts, and explicitly teaching content. In addition, integrating reading and writing can encourage students to read for ideas and write appropriately, especially if they are unfamiliar with the topic. Choi and Wong (2018) contend that by integrating reading and writing, teachers “activate their students’ content schemata to comprehend a text [and this] integration guides them to read for information and serves as comprehensible input for a subsequent writing task” (p. 3).

Teachers can achieve structural scaffolding through explicitly teaching a text’s organizational features and using sentence patterns or frames to scaffold students’ basic writing skills. Linguistic scaffolding includes direct instruction of grammar features and relevant vocabulary. Linguistic scaffolding in supporting students’ writing development requires input for different genres and purposes of writing and explicit discussion of grammatical features (Choi and Wong, 2018). Lexical knowledge helps students write coherently and cohesively and makes grammar features easier to discuss with students. In addition, it teaches them to connect grammar with different writing genres by using the simple past in the narrative writing genre, for example.

Scaffolding through Writing Exemplars
Students can borrow the linguistic and structural features and grammatical constructions from a writing model to construct their writing. This strategy boosts confidence in their writing ability and helps them build ideas and learn to write independently (Walqui, 2006).

Scaffolding through Dialogic Instruction
Dialogic feedback is the interactive exchange of negotiated meanings, interactive ideas, thoughts, and sharing of views and interpretations (Carless, 2013). Students learn to think only when they engage directly in a live dialogue with a teacher or a peer or by listening to people dialoguing. By engaging in dialogic inquiry, students learn to ask open questions and learn new things for themselves. Dialogic feedback clarifies misconceptions, boosts students’ confidence, builds trust, and allows students to express their ideas freely (Carless, 2013).

Scaffolding in the Classroom

Classroom Interactions
To assist students in their writing, the present researcher experimented with several pedagogical and research-based strategies in the classroom. Following are examples of strategies the instructor utilized to enhance students’ learning and assist them in their ZPDs.

Building content knowledge using reading texts, writing exemplars, advance organizers, and pre-writing activities (Carless, 2013; Choi & Wong, 2018; Vasquez & Coudin, 2018).
Modeling, questioning, back feeding, explaining, and explicit teaching to build content knowledge and explore language and text structure (Benko, 2012; Van de Pol et al., 2010; Walqui, 2006).

Teaching with rubrics to communicate the goals of each writing task (Andrade, 2000; Benko, 2012).

Bridging, modeling, explaining, and instructing to emphasize essential vocabulary and grammar features (Van de Pol, 2010).

Cloze exercises trigger thinking, consolidate vocabulary and enhance sentence structure (Raymond, 1988).

Teaching collocations enhances students’ native-like competence (Farrokh, 2012).

Encouraging students to use several grammatical constructions from the writing model and re-contextualize it to construct their writing. Model essays serve as comprehensible input for writing (Benko, 2012; Choi & Wong, 2018), boost students’ confidence, and reduce the fear of writing in a second language (Vanlier, 2004; Walqui, 2006).

**Focusing on Understanding**

The following is an edited transcript of a teacher-student interaction during a feedback session. By helping the student fix her sentences, the instructor focuses on understanding and builds her students’ competence.

Instructor: Look at this sentence! What is missing here? Read it for me, please.
Student: In this essay, I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of work and live in other countries.
Instructor: What’s wrong with this sentence?
Student: of? For?
Instructor: is it of live or of living?
Student: of living.
Instructor: Correct. After preps, always use either a noun or a verb ending in ‘ing.’
So of living.
Student: living and working.
Instructor: Yes. Living and working. Ok?
Student: ok.
Instructor: Now, let’s look at this one (another sentence). ‘Living and working abroad it is ….’ What’s wrong here?
Student: it is.
Instructor: yes, why is it wrong?
Student: without it.
Instructor: Good. You already have a subject. So, you don’t need to use a second one.
Student: yes, miss.
Instructor: Let’s move on to the next one. (The instructor reads the sentence aloud) For example, some people abroad in other countries to find a job’. Where’s the verb of this sentence? Some people abroad? Abroad is not a verb? Abroad means outside the country.
Student: go?
Instructor: Yes, correct. Go or travel … you can use travel.
Ok? Clear? The rest is fine.
Expanding Student Vocabulary

The following is an interaction sample in a writing class. Students were writing their first draft. One student asks for a word that collocates with ‘knowledge.’

Student: Miss, which word I can use with knowledge. I don’t want ‘get.’ I want another word.

Instructor: Ok. You can use the word …you can use one of these: ‘broaden, widen, or enhance’ (The instructor wrote the new terms on the whiteboard). There are many depending on what you want to say.

Student: traveling widen your knowledge and your experience.

Instructor: widens! Add an s. You can use ‘enrich’ or enhance your experience.

Student: okay, miss.

Instructor: for the word skills, you can use enhance, improve, or upgrade (the instructor wrote the new terms on the whiteboard).

Student: ok.

Measuring Effective Scaffolding in the Classroom

Van de Pol et al. (2010) describe scaffolding as a dynamic intervention. It references the context or situation, the nature of the task provided, and students’ responses. They argue that the main challenge for scaffolding is finding reliable and valid instruments to measure its effectiveness. Effectiveness means evidence that “the mentor’s support was tuned in to the learner’s present state of understanding, that the learner accomplished the task with the mentor’s situated help, and that the learner performed the task independently” (Van de Pol et al., 2010, p. 286). Van de Pol et al. suggest three phases of effective scaffolding: contingency, fading, and transfer of responsibility. Contingency occurs when the learner completes the task independently, makes some progress, or is ready to proceed to the next task. Fading means the instructor can vanish, and the learner needs less support. Thus, the teacher can gradually remove their support and transfer the onus of learning to the learner.

Summary

Effective scaffolded writing emphasizes and covers the different components of writing, namely its cognitive, metacognitive, and affective. In addition, independent and collaborative work, modeling, explicit teaching, follow-up discussions, and peer and teacher feedback are part and parcel of the instructional scaffolding process. Numerous research studies on scaffolding in L2 learning indicate that student writing skills and sub-skills improve significantly after incorporating instructional scaffolding into the writing activities (Melrose et al., 2013; Piamsai, 2020; Walqui, 2006). However, Van de Pol et al. (2010) argue that scaffolding cannot be applied in all situations in the same way; it is not a one-size-fits-all technique. It depends on the quality of tasks designed and how students respond. Therefore, teachers should tailor the scaffolds to students’ levels of competence and should remove scaffolding progressively as students’ learning increases. Altogether, scaffolding frameworks emphasize three central aspects of writing: cognitive, metacognitive, and affective.

The Researcher as an Active Participant in the Present Research

The present researcher is an instructor of the Intensive English Program (IEP 101). She is both an observer and a participant in this classroom research. The study is observational, descriptive,
and interpretive. The instructor emphasized key pedagogical teaching concepts and research-based strategies to scaffold students’ writing skills. In selecting and tailoring classroom tasks and stimulating instructor-student classroom interactions and discussions, the researcher highlighted the following key ideas: scaffolding contingency, fading, transfer of responsibility, and scaffolding means and intentions (Van de Pol et al., 2010). In addition, she examined the impact of affective scaffolding.

**Research Questions**

1. What writing challenges did the participants experience?
2. What effect does instructional scaffolding have on students’ writing performance from the participants’ perspectives?

**Methodology**

This section provides information on the instructional context and participants, introduces the research instruments, discusses the research procedure, and explains how data is analyzed.

**Context of the Study and Participants**

The researcher conducted the present study during the spring semester (February-May) of 2022 at the City University College of Ajman, UAE. The study participants were nine foundation-level students enrolled in the IEP 101 class. The participants are five Emirati students; three males and two females, and four male Arab expatriates. The primary goal of the IEP 101 course is to scaffold the students’ primary language skills of reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary and to prepare them for the Emirates Standardized Test (EmSAT). To teach this course, the instructor designed EmSAT-informed weekly learning plans for IEP 101 morning classes to prepare them for the EmSAT. The present research focuses on the writing component of the EmSAT. The EmSAT writing is computer-based and comprises only one writing task delivered in English. Test participants must write between 200 and 250 words of opinion essays, problem-solution essays, or advantages and disadvantages. The writing component accounts for 25% of the total EmSAT exam score, and 75% of the final score is allocated to the reading and language components of the test (see https://emsat.gov.ae/emsat/doc/Achieve).

**Research Design and Instruments**

To validate the research results, the researcher resorted to a mixed-methods approach and collected a blend of qualitative and quantitative data. Three data collection instruments were used: a pre-and post-writing test, a student attitude questionnaire, and a focus-group interview.

**Pre-and-post-writing Tests**

The researcher designed the pre-and-posttests with two goals in mind. The first is to diagnose areas of strengths and weaknesses and the second is to monitor students’ progress. Two instructors double-rated and marked both tests using a writing assessment rubric. The test results helped answer the central question of the present study about the writing challenges participants experienced.
**Student Attitude Questionnaire**
The researcher created an attitude questionnaire to gain insight into students’ perceptions, experiences, and feelings about scaffolded writing. The questionnaire comprised three parts: The first part examined students’ writing difficulties through check-all-that-apply answers for one open question. The second part contained 18 items exploring students’ cognitive, metacognitive, and affective development.

**Focus-group interview**
The researcher designed a focus-group interview involving six volunteers to triangulate the data and achieve inter-rater reliability. The interview comprised six open-ended questions intended to examine students’ thoughts about their writing at the beginning of the course and after its completion. The interviewer added probing questions as necessary. The focus-group interview is dynamic and interactive. Rabiee (2004) highlights group dynamics as a distinct feature of focus-group interviews, noting that the data generated from group interaction is deeper and richer than data obtained from individual one-to-one interviews.

**Data Analysis and Findings**
The researcher conducted the data collection and analysis concurrently in an iterative procedure. First, the researcher analyzed the questionnaire results. Then she formulated the focus-group interview questions based on the survey findings. The pre-posttests were analyzed and coded (e.g., FS1= Female Student 1; FS2=Female Student2, MS1=Male Student1, MS2=Male Student 2, etc.)

**Responses to Question 1: What writing challenges did the participants experience?**
Based on the literature review, the researcher listed ten possible challenges for students’ problems with writing in general, shortage of ideas, lack of organization, limited writing vocabulary, incorrect grammar and spelling, using Arabic as a matrix language, lack of fluency, and low levels of self-confidence in writing. The surveyed students were asked to check all the answers that applied to the first part of the questionnaire. All participants selected more than one option (see Table 1). All surveyed students reported having problems with writing. They attributed their poor writing skills to limited knowledge of essay organization, a weak vocabulary bank, and serious grammar and spelling mistakes. Seven of the nine surveyed students did not know how to start a paragraph and could not generate ideas for writing. Six out of nine students said they could not write more than 50-60 words, and five out of nine admitted they lacked confidence in their writing ability. Only two students reported thinking in Arabic and translating their thoughts into English when writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Challenges</th>
<th>N* of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing problems in general</td>
<td>100% (=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of organization</td>
<td>88.9% (=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sufficient vocabulary</td>
<td>100% (=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of content/ideas</td>
<td>77.8% (=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of writing fluency</td>
<td>77.8% (=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar mistakes</td>
<td>100% (=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling mistakes</td>
<td>100% (=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not know how to start</td>
<td>88.9% (=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking in L1 when writing in L2</td>
<td>22.3% (=2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These responses suggest that all participants find L2 writing burdensome. Shortage of writing content and poor linguistic and structural skills are evident. These deficits constitute a hindrance to some students who lack confidence in writing or think in L1 when writing in L2. Finally, slow typing speed is an issue that needs tackling.

The interviewed students’ responses to this question confirmed the questionnaire responses to this question. However, one interview participant admitted using Google Translate to translate sentences from Arabic into English, and this issue calls for further research. When asked to specify other difficulties, two participants raised the following points:

“FS1: “I am not fast. I need more time to write. I don’t finish writing in time”.
MS2 “I am not fast on computer, I spend too much time writing and always I have problems with keyboard.”

Responses to Research Question 2: What is the effect of instructional scaffolding on students’ essay writing from the participants’ perspectives?

The literature indicates that measuring the effectiveness of instructional scaffolding is challenging and stresses the value of designing reliable and valid measurement instruments. According to Van de Pol et al. (2010), a teacher’s support is effective only if the learner completes the task independently, demonstrates some progress, or moves to the next step in their learning. On this premise, the researcher utilized three methods to measure the effectiveness of scaffolding. First, two colleagues teaching the same course were invited to grade the pre and post-writing tests using a writing rubric. Second, the researcher elicited students’ attitudes and experiences about scaffolding in class through an attitude questionnaire and a focus-group interview.

The following is a record of the pre-and-post-test scores. The instructors marked them using a writing rubric emphasizing four areas: task completion, organization, linguistic variety, and structural variety and accuracy. The rubrics were assigned the following weights: writing: 15 points; task completion: 4 points; organization: 3 points; lexical variety: 4 points; structural variety and accuracy: 4 points. Letter ‘S’ refers to ‘Student.’ The instructor administered the pre-test in the second week of February and the post-test in the third week of May.

Table 2. Pre-and-Post-test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marker1</th>
<th>Marker2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task completion (4 marks)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization (3 marks)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical variety (4 marks)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural variety &amp; Accuracy (4 marks)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lack of confidence | 55.6% (=5)
Exploring the Effect of Instructional Scaffolding on Foundation Level

Table 3. Comparing Pre-and Posttest Scores Paired Samples Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>T-test</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test Scores</td>
<td>6.6111</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.11824</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test Scores</td>
<td>9.8333</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.97782</td>
<td>15.567</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Visualizing the difference between pre-test and post-test achievement scores

A paired sample t-test was conducted to test if there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The results showed a significant difference between the two tests (T=
(17)-15.567, P-value = 0.000). Figure 1 above indicates that median post-test scores are higher than median pre-test scores and that both variables appear to be normally distributed. Tables 2 and 3 indicate that students’ performance in the post-test (mean=9.83%) outweighed their performance in the pre-test (mean=6.61%). If anything, these scores confirm the positive effect of instructional scaffolding on students’ writing to varying degrees depending on their competence levels.

The researcher randomly selected three pre-and-post-tests to gain more insight into students’ performance in both tests. The papers selected were those of S3, S4, and S8. (See Tables 2 and 3).

S3 Performance in Pre-and-Post-tests

**Marker 1 Comments**

“In the pre-test, the student understood the topic, and he organized his essay well using transitional signals and sequencing. One problematic issue stood out: many fragments and run-ons. In addition, there are a couple of grammar mistakes. Some keywords are used but repetitively. I noticed that the student was more fluent in his post-writing test writing than in the pre-test. He used good words to express his ideas, such as technology, transportation, freedom, and communication. He still needs to proofread his paper. There is progress.”

**Marker 2 Comments**

“In the pre-test, the student fulfills the task and understands what is required. However, he has grammar and spelling issues. In addition, his ideas are not well-developed and, in many instances, confusing, probably due to wrong word choices. He used only essential lexical items, but he used them repetitively. In addition, he has limited control of word choice. The post-test is well structured, and the student correctly used the transition words/phrases. The student used good vocabulary but needs to mind his grammar and spelling. Nevertheless, overall, there is some improvement.”

S4 Performance in Pre-and-posttests

**Marker 1 Comments**

“The intro is well-organized, and the thesis is clear, but the sub-topics are not grammatically parallel. The student’s vocabulary range is minimal. He repeated the phrase ‘it is important twice. The last part is confusing. The post-test is clearer. The student developed his ideas in the body paragraphs but still needs work on grammar and spelling. There is a slight improvement.”

**Marker 2 Comments**

“The student understood the topic well and attempted to develop his ideas to support his claim. However, due to the limited range of lexical items, he repeated the exact words in the intro and the first paragraph. He failed to express his ideas clearly in many instances (e.g., gain new skills and avoid knowledge). In addition, he was unable to write error-free simple sentences. There are many misspelled words. In the post-test, the intro is complete, and the main idea is clearly stated. The student used specific details to back up his claim. He used good words, and the sentences were correct but lacked variety. The student used the same sentence pattern (when… they can).”
S8 Performance in Pre-and-posttests

Marker 1 Comments
“The student attempted to focus on the topic. However, there are many unnecessary sentences. His writing lacks good organization, and his vocabulary is minimal. Poor word choice and incorrect spelling interfere with meaning. He used essential words repetitively and some other words improperly (e.g., avoid knowledge). However, in the post-test, the essay is more structured; there are some good words and a few grammar mistakes. Probably they need to review if-clauses.”

Marker 2 Comments
“The student fulfilled the task in the pre-test. However, he did not expand his ideas. There is a lack of organization, and he used a limited range of lexical items. In addition, some misspelled words might interfere with the meaning. In the post-test, the student’s essay was well-organized, and he expanded his ideas more in each paragraph; he used good words and some collocations (e.g., widening knowledge) relevant to the topic in question. He was wrestling with words in the pre-test but generally felt that he wrote more comfortably and confidently, making fewer grammar mistakes in the post-test. Therefore, he made progress.”

Overall, markers reported improvement in the students’ essay organization, richer content, a more sophisticated vocabulary repertory, and higher levels of fluency and accuracy. However, students still need to improve their spelling.

Surveyed Students’ Responses to Question 2
Surveyed students’ responses (see Appendix A, Table 4) to the check-all-that-apply questions suggest that the scaffolded writing classes have helped the participants develop their cognitive knowledge. They reported gaining new words, structures, and information. They also said applying the newly acquired knowledge and skills to their writing to varying degrees. Students’ responses ranged in checking ‘I use the new knowledge when writing’ and evaluating ‘the self, peer, and teacher feedback.’ All students valued the teacher’s constructive feedback. Based on the surveyed students’ responses, students’ cognitive, metacognitive, and affective scaffolding abilities improved to varying degrees. Students have benefited from the scaffolded writing strategies, such as modeling, class discussions, and reading for information. However, they need to control their writing and depend less on their teachers as they learn.

Focus Group Interview Responses
The focus group participants’ responses support their survey responses. The following extracts (Table 5) from the interviewed participants summarize students’ overall experiences with scaffolded writing strategies and the writing challenges they encountered before joining the IEP writing class. This class is at a lower intermediate level; again, the researcher presented the quotes as they are, without editing, and classified students’ responses into cognitive, metacognitive, and affective development. She coded the sections: “FS=female student and MS= male student.”
Table 5. Focus Group Interview Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive development</th>
<th>Metacognitive development</th>
<th>Affective development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FS1: “I learn many words with my teacher.”</td>
<td>FS1: “You told us about the technique and about how we can write and now I can write a paragraph alone.”</td>
<td>FS1: “Now I am more confident when I write.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FS2: “I learn to organize my essay and many things”</td>
<td>FS2: “I can organize the paragraph and write for the separate parts.”</td>
<td>FS2: “Yes more confident.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS1: “I learn more words vocab.”</td>
<td>MS2: “I can now organize my ideas not like before.”</td>
<td>MS3: “I feel more confident.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS2: “my writing is good now, better than before and grammar also.. I mean still some mistakes but not like before.”</td>
<td>MS3: “With my teacher help, I can write essays alone. I feel more confident.”</td>
<td>MS4: “Yes more confident ..before I don’t know how to write a paragraph before.. and after we discuss it, I’m better because we discuss our mistakes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS3: “I learn new words but spelling, I want to learn how to make less mistakes in spelling.. like a technique.”</td>
<td>MS4: Yes, I use all the good words in my essay and I check my grammar of course. The spelling is my problem, teacher. I hope the EmSAT exam is like this.”</td>
<td>MS5: “yes, not afraid like before, but teacher, we still need your help when we write, not all the time like in the beginning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS5: “I used to write the word, not like 100% right. Now I’m okay. Little bit problems with grammar.”</td>
<td>MS5: “but sometimes also, you give us new ideas, new techniques to write and we use it in the essay. We write the ideas in the essay.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The conclusion to draw from students’ opinions and attitudes is that they all benefited from scaffolding in writing classes to various degrees. Students generally learned how to organize their body paragraphs, use new words in their essays, and write confidently. Although there is some progress in using correct grammar and spelling, the improvement is slight, and thus grammar and spelling constitute outstanding issues that need to be addressed.

Conclusion

The present study sought to examine students’ writing challenges and explore the effect of the scaffolded approach on their writing skills and abilities. The findings revealed that students faced problems in essay writing, such as lack of organization, paucity of ideas, and issues with grammar and spelling. The pre-posttest results indicated that students’ writing skills have improved, that they have learned to organize their essays, and that they are better able to use new words appropriately. They also learned to support their opinions with examples. In addition, they have gained more confidence in writing than before. Interviewed students emphasized the importance of teachers’ encouragement and constructive feedback to improve their writing. Accordingly, the researcher recommends scaffolding students’ writing during the pre-writing, writing, and post-writing sessions to raise their awareness of grammatical and lexical mistakes, increase their learning and reflection, and boost their confidence.

Overall, the present case study reports on nine students only. The findings it has reached are provisional. It will be interesting to see if a survey with a much higher number of students corroborates these findings. Finally, gauging the effect of scaffolding on students’ oral
communication is a project well worth pursuing from a cognitive, metacognitive, and affective perspective.

About the Author

Faiza Mohamed Tabib is a 3rd year Ph.D. student. She obtained her MATESOL degree in 2011 from the American University of Sharjah, UAE. She presented numerous Educational papers from 2014-2020. She currently works as an English instructor at the City University College of Ajman (CUCA), UAE. Her research agenda focuses on second language acquisition, academic writing, and online learning research. ORCiD; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2863-0886

References


**Appendix A**

**Table 3- Surveyed Students’ Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Gained</th>
<th>N*of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A-Cognitive</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I learned new and useful vocabulary words/phrases</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I gained new ideas from for writing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I learned proper structures and language expressions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I used the vocabulary I learned when writing essays</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I used the structures I learned when writing essays</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I used the new ideas I gained in class when writing essays</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B- Metacognitive</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I always plan before I start writing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I make sure I use appropriate vocabulary and correct grammar</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I make sure I generate relevant ideas</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. After I finish writing, I evaluate my work</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My peers’ comments are useful</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My instructor’s feedback is useful</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- Affective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Now, I feel less worried when I write an essay</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel more confident when I write an essay</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am more motivated to write an essay</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I can write on my own without my teacher’s help</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I gained more control over my writing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. In the future, I will continue practicing writing essays</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Investigating Teachers' Beliefs about the Issues Affecting their Assessment of the Writing Skills: The Case of First-Year EFL Teachers at the University of Algiers 2

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Abstract
The current study intends to investigate teachers' beliefs about the issues encountered by writing teachers when they assess writing skills at the University of Algiers 2. It also examines the factors which lie behind these challenges. Understanding the nature of the perceived challenges of assessing writing is very important to rethink the assessment practices of writing skills. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question: what are teachers' beliefs about the issues encountered when assessing students' writing skills? In this concern, the researcher adopted mixed method research to collect data by using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with ten teachers of writing selected randomly in the English department at the University of Algiers 2. Findings revealed that almost all teachers viewed the process of assessing writing as a very challenging task. Examples of the difficulties identified in this research include students' language problems, teachers' confusion between focusing on the content or the form, time pressure, overloaded classes, and lack of sufficient time to assess students' writing skills. Regarding the reasons behind these perceived challenges, teachers believed that the abovementioned issues stemmed from the lack of participation in a professional development program, low teaching load, and students' lack of intensive practice. This research provided a set of pedagogical implications to overcome these issues by calling for an emphasis on the importance of teachers' participation in a professional development program, reinforcement of teachers' training in the field of assessment, and the encouragement of students' intensive practice, and a sufficient teaching load.

Keywords:  Assessment, EFL teachers, writing skills, teachers' beliefs, university of Algiers2

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Introduction

Research on teachers' beliefs witnessed a rising interest in foreign language instruction. The construct of "teachers’ beliefs" gained significant importance as explained by Zheng (2009) pointed out that teachers’ beliefs are remarkable ideas in understanding teachers’ thinking mechanisms, instruction methods, and techniques of learning to teach. He (2009) further explained that teachers’ beliefs are central subjects in foreign language teaching as they assist teachers in developing their ideas and principles. Similarly, beliefs are personal interpretations generally constructed around ourselves, other people, and the world around us. Beliefs are individual thoughts established on observations or logical thoughts (Khader, 2012). Since teachers’ beliefs are central in the context of the foreign language classroom, Mansour (2009) illustrated that beliefs had a significant impact on teachers’ ways of understanding and dealing with issues of teaching practices. In the same vein, teachers’ beliefs have been concerned with teaching, learning, and assessing language skills, like writing which plays a remarkable role in foreign language instruction. Writing is a significant assessment vehicle at all levels of education as well as a necessary tool through which the teaching and learning process occurs. When Zamel (1983) explained the nature of writing, he pointed out that writing is a process that helps writers have an insight into their thoughts, ideas, and information to make meaning in the shape of a graphic representation. The study took place in the English department, where the teaching of writing skills is emphasized in the under-graduation program since it is a fundamental teaching unit to help students to write very well by starting from simple sentences to extended paragraphs. The assessment of writing is a crucial step in evaluating how students understand the task of writing any piece of work. Teachers generally assess their students’ summative by the end of the term according to the guidelines established in the first-year syllabus. The nature of writing skills is not likely to be mastered without difficulty; that is why Raimes (1994) pointed out that writing skill is a thorny task filled with anxiety. The evaluation of writing is a difficult task for teachers and a real dilemma for foreign language students due to its complex nature. In this respect, our interest in tackling this subject stems from the researcher’s discussions with some teachers of writing who seemed to find the assessment of writing skills a challenging task. They kept complaining about students’ low marks in the writing module and the shortage of sufficient time to assess their students’ writing skills. Also, the researchers’ observations of teachers revealed that some teachers lacked enough knowledge about test design and scoring, and there was diversity in teachers’ scoring approaches. The same teachers explained that the assessment of writing skills became a burden. It is important to note that exploring teachers’ difficulties in assessing students’ writing skills does not appear to have gained much interest in the literature and particularly at the level of the Algerian context. The different issues triggered the researcher’s curiosity to explore teachers’ beliefs about the challenges encountered when assessing writing as a productive skill.

This study is crucial since it endeavors to make a humble addition to the existing body of knowledge by helping teachers to understand the challenges faced when assessing writing skills. It also allows teachers to improve the quality of their assessment practices. Furthermore, it appeals to the importance of teachers’ professional training as a step to overcome the hurdles encountered in assessing writing skills. More notably, the significance of this study lies in the suggestions and recommendations provided to teachers, modular pedagogical teams of writing modules, and academic institutions to improve the assessment practices of writing. Besides, it urges all these stakeholders to find possible ways to overcome these issues to facilitate the task of assessment for
teachers. According to the previously expressed problem, this research will investigate the following research questions:

1. What are teachers’ beliefs about the issues encountered in assessing students’ writing skills?
2. What are the factors for teachers’ issues in assessing writing skills?

The chief purpose of this study is to have an insight into the difficulties experienced by teachers when assessing writing skills, and it investigates the primary factors that negatively influence teachers’ success in evaluating students’ writing skills.

The first part of the paper will endeavor to define the concept of assessing writing and understand the interrelation of literacy with the key construct of teachers’ beliefs. We will also attempt to shed light on the nature of writing as a productive skill and the methods used to assess it. The first part will end with a discussion of the main issues encountered by teachers in the evaluation of writing, and we shall discuss the factors for these issues. The second part will be concerned with the practical side of this study consisting of the methodology used, an analysis of the results, and a discussion of the main findings.

**Literature Review**

**Assessment Literacy**

One of the concepts that have gained concern recently is assessment literacy. The latter was first coined by the American Federation of Teachers (1990), though the concept of “assessment literacy” was not used yet. A literate teacher had to possess a set of competencies such as choosing assessment methods, designing assessment tests for the classroom, doing and scoring tests, using tests to decide about teaching, communicating the results to stakeholders, and developing consciousness of inappropriate and unethical ways of using tests. The Seven competencies were the keystones that paved the way to put a label on the concept of assessment literacy. Davies (2008) narrowed these competencies and proposed skills and knowledge as the two main components of assessment literacy. The former refers to the practical familiarity with the different ways to examine and construct tests. In contrast, the latter refers to teachers’ ability to possess the appropriate background in testing and linguistic explanation. Lately, Crusan, Plakans and Gebril (2016) explained that assessment literacy did not involve only the subject and the assessment method. Still, it was also concerned with problems of teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and practices.

Crusan Plakans and Gebril’s view (2016) did not limit assessment literacy to teachers’ familiarity with assessment methods but extended to teaching practices. Consequently, Vogt and Tsagari (2014) emphasized the significance of teachers’ training to improve students’ achievement. After discussing the nature of assessment literacy, we shall now turn our discussion in the next part to the central concept of the study, “teachers’ beliefs.”

**Beliefs**

The term "beliefs" has been understood differently by various researchers who gave it the labels of personal knowledge and values (Ernest, 1989; Robson, 1991; as cited in Pajares, 1992; Wang, 1996). Pajares (1992) defined a belief as an "individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity
of a proposition” (p.316). Pajares’ definition, we may consider beliefs as attitudes, personal judgments about the degree to which any proposal can be either true or false. He further argued that studying teachers’ beliefs was challenging since it was difficult to define its nature adequately, and its conceptual aspect was not well established. There was a variety in the understanding of beliefs and how they function. Similarly, Borg (2001) claimed that a belief is having an intentional or unintentional judgment of an idea that is considered accurate. Borg (2006) used the term: "Teachers’ cognition” to refer to teachers’ beliefs, and he defined cognition as the

"often a tacit, personally-held, practical system of mental constructs held by teachers… which are dynamic—i.e., defined and refined based on the educational and professional experiences throughout teachers’ lives.”(p.35)

Borg’s definition highlighted that beliefs were cognitive, implicit, personal, and possessed constructs that were active or subject to identification and readjustment depending on the instructional and professional context. According to Buchanan (2015), beliefs are the personal theories made by individuals when they infer the different features of a specific phenomenon from their understanding and views of the world based on their observations or personal experience of real life. Hapsari and Kusumawardani (2017) maintained that beliefs established the basis for teachers' "goals, procedures, materials, and classroom interaction patterns" and even "their roles, their students, and the schools they work in" (p. 3). This definition shows the importance of beliefs in shaping classroom practices, their significant impact on defining teachers’ and students’ roles, and the formal settings in which they teach. Peacock (2001) pointed out that beliefs are appreciations kept psychologically, suppositions, and theories that center on the world and which they believe to be true. Borg (2001) viewed belief as: “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour” (p.186). Borg’s definition highlights that beliefs can be conscious or unconscious since they make their holders form judgments, and they influence teachers’ thoughts and classroom practices. Therefore, we will adopt Peacock’s definition of beliefs in this study within the theoretical framework of Socio-Constructivist Theory which indicates that context and culture play a role in framing teachers’ understanding and beliefs (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). These definitions explain the importance of teachers’ beliefs in assessing their students’ writing skills. The following part will tackle the nature of writing skills.

Writing

In an attempt to define the nature of writing skills, a myriad of views was put forward, mainly by Zamel (1992), who viewed writing as an investigative, dynamic process that involves the interaction between the writer and his written language to achieve a specific purpose. According to Lado(2000), writing is the capacity to use structures, vocabulary items, and their predictable demonstration in normal matter-of-fact writing. In addition, Richards and Schmidt (2002) believed that "writing is viewed as a result of complex processes of planning, drafting, reviewing, and revising" (p.529). Furthermore, writing is said to be beneficial as it may help thinking and problem-solving since learners are exposed to a topic and asked to discuss it and even find solutions to the proposed issue (Krashen, 2003). All these definitions demonstrate the
importance of writing as a productive skill. Now, we shall turn our discussion to the evaluation of writing in the following part.

*Assessing Writing*

Before discussing the different ways to assess writing, it is crucial to define assessment as an organized approach to gather data about the learner’s progress and achievement in learning in multiple parts of the course. Assessment can be attained through formal tests, essays, interviews, questionnaires, standardized examinations, or informal observations (Hyland, 2003). In the same respect, evaluating the writing skill might seem simple, but it is a source of disturbance for teachers (Brown, 2003). To clarify this issue better, Williams (2003) highlighted that the bias in assessing writing was due to standard discrepancy in assessing writing that results in an unfair evaluation. Also, he asserted that the object of writing assessment created confusion for teachers regarding either the assessment of writing content (topical knowledge) or the general capacity to write and evaluate their students’ performance on certain specific tasks. Weigle (2002) linked the difficulty in assessing writing as a productive skill to its different genres, objectives, and writing styles. As far as the scoring of writing is concerned, we find two main approaches in the literature that are: holistic and analytical. The first refers to using a single scale that incorporates all the writing qualities and considers it one single unit. However, the second entails raters’ judgment of a written text against a well-structured devised set of criteria that are important for a good piece of writing, and each aspect has a specific mark (Hyland, 2003).

*Teachers’ Difficulties in Assessing writing skills*

In the studies we shall review in this section, researchers tried to investigate teachers’ difficulties when they assess their students’ writing skills. To begin with, Fleming and Chambers (1983) did a study in the context of the United States, and they found that teachers’ writing tests were low in quality since the test items were vague. Therefore, the two researchers could understand that teachers lack enough knowledge to design good tests.

Sihombing (2016) conducted a qualitative interview-based study at an Indonesian senior high school level with a group of English teachers. The Results revealed that assessing writing was a complex task for teachers due to many issues like teachers’ lack of sufficient time to correct their students’ written works because of the large number of students. Teachers also reported that students wrote short paragraphs because of their shortage of using the appropriate lexis. Additionally, teachers pointed out that they did not have a scoring rubric to assess their students’ writing, so they relied only on a holistic marking; that is to say, they gave an overall intuitive response to students’ writing. Teachers also found that some students’ written tests were unclear and difficult to read.

Investigating the same issue in the Mexican context, González (2017) conducted a qualitative study by administering a background questionnaire to teachers and a semi-structured interview with EFL program managers. The results revealed that almost all teachers found it challenging to teach and assess writing since they thought it was time-consuming. In addition, the latter reported that students had poor writing abilities since they struggled to study writing in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers expressed their difficulties coping with the scoring rubric used. The researcher took the views of language program managers into account, and they reported that...
teachers have problems with subjectivity and reliability. Moreover, they asserted that large amounts of time required, lack of trained teachers, their shortage of writing habits, and the intimidation between teachers and managers were the main challenges in assessing writing skills.

In the Algerian context, Nedjai and Ghouar (2017) did a study to explore the moral considerations in assessment practices at the University of Banta 2. Their research was an exploratory study that relied on using oral and written tests. Teachers seem to lack one shared scoring scale when evaluating writing and speaking skills and confirmed their unawareness of the different testing criteria.

As for the reasons which underlie these difficulties, a set of factors that influence the assessment of writing are assessment literacy, shortage of teaching qualifications, teachers’ specialization, teacher-student power relations, high-density classrooms, teaching load, and a few socio-cultural issues (Ahmed& Troudi, 2018). Barkaoui (2007) shared this view when he did a study to explore raters’ scoring of Tunisian students’ EFL writing. The researcher used qualitative and quantitative approaches where four EFL teachers scored 24 EFL essays silently. Similarly, they used the thinking aloud technique by relying on holistic scoring and eventually multiple trait-marking scales. The findings revealed that teachers marked writing skills impressionistically without scoring criteria or instructions. Their assessment was a combination of norm and criterion-referenced, which shows that teachers who did not have enough apprenticeship in the assessment of writing skills may affect their assessment and make it a complex task for EFL writing teachers.

As we observed beforehand, only a few studies dealt with teachers’ beliefs about the difficulties in assessing their students’ writing skills. The Reviewed studies focused mainly on exploring students’ challenges when they write; their attitudes towards their teachers’ assessment methods; and teachers’ issues in assessing writing skills without trying to shed light on the reasons for having these issues. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has investigated the challenges encountered by teachers when assessing writing in the Algerian context. Hence, this study aims to explore the difficulties experienced by teachers when evaluating writing skills. It also endeavors to have an insight into the factors inhibiting teachers’ success to assess students’ writing skills appropriately.

Methods

This research followed a mixed-methods approach which involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. It attempts to investigate teachers' beliefs about the issues faced in assessing writing skills and then identify the factors contributing to these difficulties. Regarding the research design, the researcher adopted an exploratory case study to go hand in hand with the nature and purposes of this study.

Participants

This study took place in the department of English at the University of Algiers during the academic year 2021–2022. The sample of the study consisted of 10 teachers of writing whose teaching experience ranged between three and 20 years, and their selection was random. We
referred to every teacher as ‘T’ followed by a number to ensure confidentiality for the participants. Table one shows the information about the profiles of the participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Codes</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic Degree</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>9-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>9-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>9-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>9-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>9-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>16-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>16-22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Instruments**

The researcher carried out the current study by relying on two main research instruments a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with first-year EFL teachers of writing.

**Teachers’ Questionnaire**

The mixed questionnaire aimed to unveil the various issues encountered when assessing writing skills and the factors behind these difficulties. It contains 11 items that aim to explore teachers’ background information, their beliefs about the issues encountered in their assessment process, and the factors for these challenges. The first section of the questionnaire was devoted to collecting information about the background information of the teachers, such as gender, degree, and years of experience. The second section was developed based on the review of the studies mentioned above by Sihombing (2016) and González (2017). As for the third section of the questionnaire, the researcher constructed it by using some items from Ahmed and Troudi’s study (2018),

**Teachers’ Semi-Structured Interview**

The semi-structured interview strived to probe further our understanding of the participants’ challenges, which they believe to occur within the assessment process of writing as a productive skill. It consisted of three main questions that are mainly concerned with identifying other difficulties associated with the scoring of writing skills, the factors which cause them, and teachers’ suggestions to overcome these issues.

**Research Procedures**

To answer the research questions, we administered a questionnaire, and later we conducted a semi-structured with ten teachers of writing skills. Before giving the questionnaire to teachers, it was first piloted to three teachers to check for any wording or redundancy in the questionnaire, all of them found it easy to answer, and all the items were understandable. After its piloting, the researcher gave the questionnaires to ten teachers of writing, who took 30 minutes to answer them carefully. The results yielded by using close-ended items of the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively and presented in charts and tables. As for the open-ended questions, they were
coded using content analysis and classified. Before interviewing teachers, the researcher asked the participants for their agreement to participate in this study. The researcher took 40 minutes to ask and interview every teacher was asked about other perceived issues encountered when they evaluate writing skills, the reasons behind these issues, and their suggestions to overcome these difficulties. The interviews were subject to recording and transcription. We used Codes as shown in Table 1 to protect the teachers’ identities. The data obtained from the semi-structured interview was analyzed qualitatively by first doing a within-case analysis to have a thorough insight into every teacher’s verbal data and try to understand the relationship between the ideas and themes generated by each teacher. Second, we did a cross-case analysis to shed light on the common themes among all the participants. Lastly, the researcher compared the data obtained from the two sources for cross-checking the findings to explore the researched issue thoroughly.

Results

Results of Teachers’ Questionnaire

Background Information of Teachers

As stated earlier, the majority of the respondents to the questionnaire are females (9), whereas one respondent is a male. Also, eight teachers who answered hold a degree of magister while two of the respondents have a doctorate. As for the experience of teachers, five teachers have considerable experience between nine and 15, while three teachers have moderate experience ranging between two and eight years. We noticed that only two teachers are the most experienced ones in the instruction of writing skills.

Teachers’ Beliefs of the Issues Encountered in the Assessment of Writing Skills

The following figures and tables tackle beliefs of beliefs about the issues they encounter when assessing writing skills.

![Figure 1. Teachers’ beliefs about the difficulty of assessing writing](image)

Figure one shows that more than half of the teachers (60%) viewed the process of scoring writing skills as very challenging, whereas four teachers (40%) believed it was a difficult task. We noticed that no teacher viewed the scoring as an easy task.

The Reasons for Viewing Assessment as a Very Challenging Task

The analysis of the verbal data linked to the fourth question of the questionnaire led to the emergence of two main categories:
All teachers believed that their students' low writing abilities were the main reason for finding it challenging to assess writing tests. All of them explained that all types of mistakes, mainly grammar, spelling, and punctuation, were found in the writing tests. They also pointed out that students had various language problems, not only grammar, but some of them failed to write relevant sentences, in addition to using some structures transferred from Arabic or French into English. They have a weakness in grammar, a lack of vocabulary, and their basic knowledge of the English language is deficient. One teacher (T1) said, "when I start correcting the copies of my students, I find all types of language problems, such as fragmented sentences and problems of grammar." Another teacher (T5) stated that "almost all students have an issue with language when I teach them how to write. It is not just about the instruction of writing; I find myself teaching them about the language, and this is a real dilemma.

Some teachers viewed the process of scoring writing skills as very challenging due to the complex nature of writing skills. They also explained that marking writing tests required full concentration and objectivity to mark writing skills, particularly when the assessment form was extensive or free writing topics. In this respect, one teacher (T9) clarified that "it is a productive skill which requires our full concentration and time to mark the exams of students, and it involves several readings of the written piece to mark it." Also, another teacher (T1) pointed out that "wherever I start scoring writing skills, especially when it takes the form of a free writing or direct free questions, it is hard to mark the way students write.

Figure 2. Teachers’ beliefs about scoring writing skills

Figure two demonstrates that a large proportion of teachers (90%) viewed the assessment of writing skills as time-consuming. On the other hand, one teacher (10%) believed that it was slightly time-consuming.

The Reasons for Viewing Assessment as very Time – Consuming

The analysis of the verbal data linked to the fifth question of the questionnaire led to the emergence of two main categories:

- All teachers (10) argued that a large number of students is a factor in making the marking process a time-consuming one. One teacher (T2) clarified that "the number of students is large, so it takes a long time to score their tests." Another teacher (T5) asserted that "we correct more than 80 copies per group. It takes much time and energy to correct this huge number of copies."
Three teachers explained that they used a detailed analytical scheme with different criteria to make their scoring fair and reliable. Moreover, they asserted that writing all the criteria on students' tests made their assessment very time and energy-consuming. In the same vein, two teachers (T4 and T5) said: “because I use a scoring scheme which has many criteria, that is why it is very time-consuming for me.” Another teacher (T3) stated that "because I have ten aspects which I am looking at, such as coherence, cohesion, mechanics, spelling, content, originality, language use, use of the topic sentence, concluding sentences, the use of transition words. Considering this type of scoring, it takes me much time to correct writing tests.

**Figure 3.** Teachers’ beliefs about the number of students’ mistakes in writing

Figure three displays that 90% of teachers believed that their students made many mistakes when writing on a test, while one teacher (10%) reported that her students made some mistakes on their writing tests.

**Table 2. Teachers’ beliefs of mistakes as an issue in the marking of writing skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Two reveals that all teachers (100%) viewed the many mistakes made by students as the main obstacle faced when assessing writing skills. Consequently, it made the process a very challenging one. Conversely, no teacher denied that mistakes inhibited the scoring procedure.

**Figure 4.** Teachers’ beliefs on the degree of difficulty in setting criteria for assessment
Figure four shows that 80% of teachers believed setting criteria to mark written tests was difficult, while one teacher (10%) thought it was slightly easy. Another one (10%) viewed it as an easy task to set criteria to mark writing tests.

![Figure 4](image1.png)

**Figure 4.** Teachers’ beliefs about the issues affecting their assessment

Figure five demonstrates that almost all teachers (90%) denied participation in a professional development program. However, only one teacher (T10) confirmed that she participated in a professional development program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Teachers’ beliefs about the suitability of timing in the instruction of writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three shows that all teachers (100%) viewed the time allotted to the teaching of writing skills as insufficient for them. The researcher noticed that all teachers agreed on the lack of enough time to instruct writing as a fundamental unit.

![Table 3](image2.png)

**Figure 5.** Teachers’ involvement in a professional development program

Figure six demonstrates that 90% of teachers believed that teaching load influenced their assessment process, while one teacher (10%) thought it did not affect the evaluation of writing skills. We shall present the findings of the first interview question in the following section

**Results from the Teachers’ Interview**

**Challenges Encountered by Teachers in their Assessing Writing Skills**

The first interview question: what other issues do you experience when you assess writing skills? The first question aimed to identify the type of issues which teachers encounter when they...
score writing skills. The theme for this question is: “the type of issues faced by teachers in the assessment of writing skills.” The analysis of the verbal data linked to the first question of the interview led to the emergence of three main categories.

The first category is called “confusion between assessing content and form.” The results related to the first question revealed that three teachers (T1, T3, and T2) pointed out another issue of feeling confused between focusing on the writing content or the form. One teacher (T3) said: "When I start marking tests, I find myself with students who write good content with awful language or the opposite. So, it is hard to decide whether I should focus on content or form.” Another teacher (T4) claimed there was always a gap between teaching and scoring writing skills, considering their level and the type of tasks to be included.

The second category is “challenges in deciding the criteria of assessment.” The analysis of the first main question revealed that the majority of teachers (6) believed that they found it challenging to set criteria to analyze exam copies. Two teachers (T2 and T3) claimed that it was challenging and time-consuming to establish norms to assess the writing tests of different students. Two other teachers (T4 and T5) pointed out that their difficulty is related to the necessity to consider all the aspects of writing and, thus, teachers need to establish criteria according to them. To illustrate, one teacher (T4) stated: "Well, my major issue is that I do not know how to set criteria to suit all the needs and aspirations of my students." It seems easy, but it is difficult. Therefore, I find myself fighting to establish clear criteria for every aspect of writing.” Two other teachers (T6 and T8) explained that the agreement was on the format and the content, but deciding on the type of scoring, holistic or analytical, was the concern of each teacher.

The third category, which appeared from analyzing the verbal data linked with the first question of the interview, is known as "time pressure." All teachers believed that time pressure and administrative deadlines to return and submit the results presented a significant challenge when they assessed an important module like writing. Moreover, all teachers explained that the time between exams, correcting them, and giving back final results to the administration was short and constrained. Similarly, it made the scoring procedure very challenging. In the same respect, two teachers said: "time pressure causes them to feel frustrated, lack of concentration, and time to assess writing skills fairly."

Factors Behind Assessment Difficulties

The results, linked with the second question of the interview, are presented in the following section. The second interview question is: what are the reasons behind these challenges in assessing writing skills?

The theme of this question is known as "the factors that are responsible for the emergence of these issues." When analyzing the teachers' answers, three different categories have emerged concerning the second question of the interview. The first category is entitled "students’ shortage of practice." All teachers believed that students did not have sufficient practice was the paramount factor behind their low language abilities. They further explained that students seem to lack motivation or interest in writing. Hence, five other teachers stated, "when we give them
assignments, students show no sign of interest or motivation. Some students do the homework, while most do not practice what we generally do in the classroom.”

The second category is entitled "insufficient hours of teaching writing skills." Most teachers (8) explained that the low teaching load, or in other words, teaching a crucial module like writing, was currently two hours per week, and teachers believed it to be insufficient for both teachers to cover all that was essential. As a result, students lacked enough writing practice and relied on previous input in written assignments. In the same vein, one teacher (T4) said: "I think that students do not have enough practice due to short sessions and thus hinder the process of teaching, assessing, and eventually giving feedback."

The third category that emerged from the analysis is "teachers’ lack of participation in a professional development program." Almost all teachers (9) explained that the absence of a teachers' professional development program made the marking of writing skills very hard. It was the reason behind some teachers' inability to decide what to include and how to assess students on the input they studied previously. In addition, some teachers(6) argued that their inability to set criteria for evaluating writing skills was the result of their lack of training or literacy in the different concepts of assessment, methods, and types of tasks that they used to assess writing skills. Besides, some teachers (T1) explained that the absence of a professional development program for some teachers whose specialty was in literature and civilization made it very difficult to decide about the nature of testing and keep their knowledge in the assessment field limited.

Teachers’ Suggestions to Overcome Assessment Issues

The results, linked with the third question of the interview, are presented in the following section. The third interview question is "what suggestions do you have for overcoming these issues with assessing writing skills?"

The theme for this question is “teachers’ suggestions to overcome the issues of assessing writing skills." When analyzing teachers’ answers, two categories have appeared concerning the second question of the interview. The first category that emerged from the analysis is "students’ intensive practice." All teachers (10) emphasized the necessity of intensive practice for their students by writing small paragraphs, doing many assignments at home, and doing extensive reading as a preliminary step to developing their writing skills. Moreover, teachers argued that they needed more practice in the classroom, and they suggested an increase in the teaching load to help students improve their writing and enrich their vocabulary. In the same respect, one teacher (T2) highlighted the importance of using the process approach to teach writing skills to show students the main steps and train them to write in the classroom. And teachers can do it by starting from brainstorming to producing a final draft. One teacher said, "I think that practice is the only way for students to improve themselves."

The second category is “the necessity of participation in professional development programs.” Almost all teachers (9) pointed out the importance of their participation in helping teachers develop and become familiar with the concepts of assessment and scoring methods. They also explained that their involvement in professional development programs would allow teachers to enrich their knowledge and familiarity with assessment practices and permit them to
reflect on their assessment methods. Moreover, it helps them improve their practices in designing a good writing test, using a reliable scoring scheme, and finding suitable ways to give feedback on writing tests, especially for literature teachers.

The study revealed that more than half of the teachers (60%) found assessing writing skills very difficult, and they linked these difficulties to various issues such as low language abilities of the students, feeling confused about focusing on the content or the form, time pressure, large classes, and lack of enough time to score writing skills. Regarding the reasons for these perceived issues, the majority of teachers associated them with multiple sources, like their shortage of participation in professional development programs or assessment workshops; low hours of teaching writing, and students' lack of intensive practice either by themselves or at the level of the classroom due to time constraints. We shall tackle the discussion of the main findings and strive to answer the research question of this research in the next section.

Discussion

Our study focused on teachers’ beliefs about the issues experienced when they assess writing skills. As far as the first research question is concerned, the results obtained from teachers’ questionnaires and interviews revealed that most teachers believed that scoring writing skills were a difficult task, and this was explained by Brown (2003), who argued that assessing writing may look easy. Still, it can be a source of frustration for some teachers since it involves having a clear vision of the objectives and the criteria to be used to assess writing abilities. As we previously found out in the results section, teachers believed that scoring writing skills was time-consuming, and required much time and concentration to correct students' writing skills. This issue is aligned with González’s result (2017) that assessing writing skills take much time and effort to score correctly. Another major issue that hindered the scoring of the writing skills was students’ language problems and their lack of mastering language mechanics like indentation, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. Students had a shortage of using sound grammar like pronouns, subject-verb agreement, problems with using the appropriate tenses, misuse, overuse, or underuse of grammatical conjunctions, and poor vocabulary. In addition, teachers believed that most students wrote unstructured sentences without having a logical connection between them. These results are likely to align with Gonzalez's interview (2017) with teachers who confirmed the students’ weak English by explaining that students have poor writing skills and they do not manage to connect their ideas. Besides, students' linguistic problems and their inability to use a variety of vocabulary items were also reported by Sihombing’s study (2016), in which students lacked the appropriate vocabulary to improve their writing skills. Another issue that emerged from the data was teachers who felt confused between focusing on the form, particularly the test organization, and the linguistic aspects of the content. This result is in line with Williams’ argument (2003), who explained that deciding about the object of writing assessment or 'what to measure' leads to teachers' confusion about whether they should assess the content (topical knowledge) or students’ overall capacity to write or perform on a specific writing task. In addition to the previously mentioned challenges, some teachers had the issue of the inability to set clear criteria, especially with activities of open questions, paragraphs, or essays. This result is in line with the studies of Sihombing (2016) and González (2017), which demonstrated that teachers found problems in setting clear criteria and their inability to use an analytical scheme; hence, they used holistic scoring to evaluate their students’ whole performance. Moreover, teachers related their difficulty
in setting clear criteria to the absence of one shared scoring scheme. Their collaboration with colleagues focused on agreeing on the format and content, not the scoring method. This result is in line with Nedjai and Ghouar’s study (2017), in which they explained that the absence of a shared scheme to assess writing and speaking skills caused the difficulty in evaluating two skills fairly. The last issue reported by teachers was time constraints, namely, their shortage of sufficient time to mark students’ skills. They explained that the time load to administer an exam and score writing tests was short, and it put significant pressure on teachers’ abilities to adequately assess the skills of their students. This result corroborates with the study by Sihombing (2016) that reported teachers' lack of time to evaluate writing skills.

As for the second research question, it tried to shed light on the factors that cause teachers’ issues when assessing writing skills. Among these factors, there is first the complex nature of writing; that is to say, teachers need to read several writing tests when they take the form of an open question, a paragraph, or an essay. This result goes in line with what Weigle (2002) explained as an aspect that adds to the complexity of writing as a skill with different genres, aims, and writing styles. Second, large classes ranging between 50 to 60 students per group seemed to influence how teachers scored their students' writing skills; therefore, it took them a lot of time and effort to assess the exam copies attentively. This reason was also found in the studies of Sihombing (2016) and González (2017). Likewise, Ahmed and Troudi (2018) also explained that high-density classes affect the assessment process negatively and make it quite challenging. Third, a Low teaching load or teaching the module of writing for an insufficient time affected the quality of assessing writing skills. In this regard, Ahmed and Troudi (2018) explained that assessment was affected by the low teaching load, which hindered the evaluation process and feedback delivery. Another factor for the issue of students’ low language abilities was the lack of enough practice, as teachers explained in their interviews, which stemmed from the passivity of students, lack of motivation, and carelessness. Teachers claimed that students were used to rote learning and memorization of topics, which reduced their capacity to write and think critically. We discussed this factor from the answers given by teachers in the different interviews due to the scarcity of research on this specific aspect. Lastly, another factor responsible for the confusion of some teachers regarding what to include and their failure to set clear criteria was their lack of participation in professional development programs, or in other words, they did not have enough training concerning assessment methods, testing background, and test design except for their discussions of test format in pedagogical teams just before exams. This result aligns with the findings of both Fleming and Chambers (1983) and González studies (2017).

Despite its attempt to explore the issues above, it has some shortcomings that need to be considered by future researchers. One limitation is that the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the context of other universities since the sample was small and due to the subjective nature of teachers’ beliefs. Another limitation was the scarcity of studies that tackled this specific issue. Therefore, some challenges were faced when we tried to discuss the results of our research with the previous ones. The Last limitation was that our focus was on how teachers perceived the scoring of writing. Therefore, Future researchers can look at this research again by considering the perspectives and attitudes of students about the assessment methods and practices of their teachers. Besides, Researchers can replicate again this study by making a cross-comparison between different contexts to check if the same issues exist.
Conclusion

To conclude, this study aimed to investigate teachers’ beliefs about the issues faced when scoring writing skills and tried to investigate the reasons for these issues. After carefully analyzing the data, it revealed that almost all teachers found it challenging to assess writing skills. Teachers’ difficulties were feeling confused between focusing on the content or the form, time pressure, large classes, and a lack of sufficient time to score students’ writing skills. Accordingly, it is necessary to make teachers aware of the importance of having an apprenticeship to facilitate their assessment process, as it prepares teachers to become agent teachers to deal with stressful classroom conditions such as large classes and low teaching load. It tries to call humbly for the reinforcement of professional development programs to help teachers master or develop more literacy in the assessment field, mainly through the organization of assessment workshops and seminars by experts in the domain. As for the factors that caused the different issues, teachers reported their lack of involvement in professional development programs or assessment workshops, low hours of teaching writing, and shortage of intensive practice for their students. As a result, teachers should encourage students to practice intensively within and outside the classroom to reinforce students’ writing skills in general. It is necessary to emphasize the importance of teamwork to add to the richness of teaching and assessing writing. Teachers should focus more on giving constructive feedback to make students aware of their weaknesses and reward their strengths. Last but not least, adding more hours of teaching writing skills is a step to ensure intensive practice for the students and enough time for teachers to improve their students’ writing abilities.

About the Author

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Investigating Teachers’ Beliefs about the Issues Affecting their Assessment

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The Role of Gender on Saudi English Language Learners’ Performance of Refusals

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Abstract
Refusal is one of the most complicated challenges for the hearer, as a face-threatening act, which is influenced by social factors such as gender. Thus, the main purpose of the study is to investigate the role of gender on the speech acts of refusal by comparing the performance of English foreign language (EFL) learners and English second language (ESL) learners, males and females. EFL and ESL students' data were collected using an online written Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which was modified and further classified based on Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz's (1990) model. A total of 32 postgraduate students participated in this study: 16 Saudi EFL students in Saudi Arabia (eight males, eight females) and 16 Saudi ESL students in the United Kingdom (eight males, eight females). The study found that gender has no significant role in performing refusals except in using indirect strategies and adjuncts by EFL males and females with different interlocutors and the number of instances used with different objects.

Keywords: English foreign language (EFL) learners, English second language (ESL) learners, Pragmatics, the role of gender, the speech act of refusals.

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Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively is the primary purpose of language learning and the key to success for many foreign and second language learners. To achieve their communicative goals, language learners need to learn to use a range of speech acts effectively, such as requests, complaints, apologies and refusals (Kasper & Rose, 2001). Moreover, it has been found that some speech acts are more problematic to learn and understand than others.

Two main theories are crucial in studying pragmatics, in general, and politeness, in particular. Speech act theory has been defined by Austin (1962) as the utterances which are not merely informative units but functional acts in the communication process. Politeness theory which has been introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987) is a form of behavior that encourages communication between potential bold partners. Moreover, politeness theory includes face-threatening acts (FTAs) as one of its components, which are defined as those acts which threaten the speaker’s or listener’s positive or negative face. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that refusals are face-threatening acts since they require more communication skills without misunderstanding or embarrassment. Thus, in this study, the speech act of refusals is employed to investigate the pragmatic differences among learners.

Furthermore, according to Brown and Levinson (1987) and Fraser (1990), gender is one crucial factor behind the complexity of performing refusals. Hence, this study will investigate this complexity among two groups of learners EFL and ESL learners. As EFL learners, especially those who study business, computer sciences and financial administration need to use the English language in their future workplaces either with people, males and females from the same country or with people from different countries who speak English for communication purposes. ESL learners are required to use English to interact with other learners, males and females, for education purposes, in learning classrooms or outside classrooms for more practice in the learning language, or even with the native-speaking community. Thus, to avoid misunderstanding or miscommunicating, this study will explore the pragmatic performances among males and females, focusing on refusal speech acts.

Moreover, the findings of this study will be fruitful. First, for English language learners to identify the differences and improve their refusal performances. Second, for English teachers to work on enhancing and raising their learners' pragmatic awareness in foreign or second language learning environments. These findings will be reached after answering the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in the performance of EFL males and females as regards their usage of refusal strategies and adjuncts?
2. Are there differences in the performance of ESL males and females as regards their use of refusal strategies and adjuncts?

Ultimately, this paper will be structured as follow: after this introduction, the literature review will be provided, accompanied by the previous studies that investigated the role of gender on refusal speech acts. This will be followed by discussing the methodology and presenting the main findings. Finally, the conclusion of this study and future research recommendations will be given.
Literature Review

Language and Gender

Generally speaking, many researchers believe that different genders mean different use of the language since some specific features are found to be more frequent in females’ language, more than in males and vice versa (e.g., Lakoff, 1990; Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001; Rubin & Greene, 1992; Tannen, 1990; Winn & Rubin, 2001). One of the earliest studies that traced gender differences by focusing on specific discourse features was conducted by Lakoff (1975), who then suggested that women’s language is weaker than men’s language due to women’s use of many language features, including tag questions and hedges (e.g. I think, might, could), which can represent unassertiveness and reflect longstanding power inequalities between men and women in society.

Such findings have been supported by some previous studies, which found gender differences (Zimmerman & West, 1975; Fishman, 1980), as well as Herring’s (1993, 1994) work in online spaces. She found that both genders use language consistent with traditional stereotypes about gendered interactional styles since men’s style is described as critical and aggressive, which includes sarcasm, self-promotion, rhetorical questions and challenges to others, while women’s style is described as person-oriented, which includes asking questions, agreement, thanking and appreciation. Another study has investigated the differences between genders’ language by focusing on the discourse style. Tannen (1994) claimed that the discourse style of men is more reporting, completive and assertive, which aims to convey facts, whereas the discourse style of women is more communicative and supportive, which aims to create and maintain relationships. Gu (2013) has reviewed many studies and reached one conclusion which is that most of the researchers believe that there are differences between gender and language since females usually tend to be more polite than males, and that females' language is more implicit and indirect, while males' language is more direct.

On the contrary, some other researchers believe that the issue of gender and language is more complicated than merely generalizing that, for example, a specific discourse style is used by men more than women or vice versa. Cameron (2007) indicated that gender’s use of language could differ across cultures since women in western culture are less direct and more cooperative than men, who are more assertive and competitive, but not in other cultures, where the opposite is true. Some other scholars indicated that gender makes no difference in specific contexts. McRae (2009) found that men and women were similar in favor of mitigating and cooperative styles of disagreeing during interaction in business meetings in workplace settings. Similarly, McDowell’s (2015) study concluded that male nurses’ linguistic styles were like feminine styles in performing empathetic discourses during nurse-to-nurse interaction. Thus, in terms of language and gender in general, differences cannot always be predictable since this depends on many other variables.

More specifically, in terms of speech acts and gender, they are interrelated and interwoven with each other (Boxer, 1993; Holmes, 1995; Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990), especially the speech act of refusals which can be influenced by gender as well as other contextual factors such as social status, power and age (Felix-Brasdefer, 2006; Fraser, 1990; Smith, 1998).
Gender, Language Learning, and Refusals

Very few studies have investigated the role of gender in English language learners’ refusal utterances. Two of these studies have focused only on one gender of language learners, either males or females, in two different learning environments and concluded different results regarding the directness and indirectness of their refusals. One of those studies was conducted in the late 1990s by Widjaja (1997), who compared the performance of refusals among female Taiwanese ESL learners and American female English native speakers by using role-plays and interviews. The study found that Taiwanese females tended to be more direct and concluded that the reason for this was over-generalisation. This could be due to learners applying one specific rule to other situations and negative transfer from the mother language. Another study was conducted at the beginning twentieth by Al-Eryani (2007), who used DCT to examine the refusals of invitations/offers, suggestions and requests when addressing people of different social statuses among three males groups: Yemeni Arabic native speakers, Yemeni Arabic EFL learners, and native speakers of English. He found that Arabic male EFL learners preferred indirect refusals and that their productions differed based on the social status of the interlocutors. However, both of these studies, Widjaja (1997) and Al-Eryani (2007) have investigated one gender rather than comparing both, which can be seen as a gap in the literature.

Furthermore, regardless of the significance of the relationship between gender and language, most of the studies which investigated English language learners and were conducted in the same context, Iran, reached a similar conclusion which is that gender does not affect English learners’ refusal speech acts. For example, Hassani, Mardani, & Dastjerdi (2011) examined the role of gender among EFL learners, once in their native language and once in English, and found no differences between students' production in terms of their gender. Arani & Tehrani (2013) found that gender had no meaningful effect on the choices of refusal strategies, and Parvaresh, Bidaki, & Farahani (2014) found that the role of gender was restricted to the use of a regret strategy, with EFL females making more regret statements than males. Rahbar, Oroji, & Hedayatnejad (2015) and Hedayatnejad, Maleki, & Mehrizi (2016) have focused on the study of refusal of suggestion among formal and informal situations for the former and different social statuses for the latter. They reported that the application of refusal strategies in formal or informal situations was not statistically different between females and males (for the former), and that females and males were similar to each other in terms of the applied strategies to people with different social statuses. However, the only study in the Iranian context which reached a different conclusion was that conducted by Akram, Rohani, & Ravand (2015). They found that the EFL female and male learners were significantly different in using the refusal strategies since some strategies were more frequent in females’ refusals than males, such as statements of empathy, regret, postponement, hedging and statements of principle. They also found that males used to criticize the requester more frequently than females.

Yet, among other non-Arabic contexts, two other studies in two other different contexts indicated that the English female and male learners were different in performing the refusals. Tuncer & Turhan (2019) examined the effect of gender and interlocutor status on the refusals of Turkish pre-service teachers of English and found that females and males were different since females preferred using indirect strategies, especially the use of negative willingness, and utilized
more refusals with equal and lower interlocutors, but males were more direct, particularly in using direct 'no', and used more refusals with higher interlocutors. Wang (2019) compared the EFL Chinese females and males using the refusal strategies. It was found that the female students tended to avoid threats of face, so they utilized more indirect strategies such as apology, pity, promise, suggestion, dissuasion and reason, the excuse of explanation and adjuncts, while males were more direct in performing refusals.

In the Arabic context, only two studies (to the best of the researcher’s knowledge) have investigated the role of gender on English learners’ speech act of refusals. Both studies indicated that females and males refuse in different ways. Qadoury Abed (2011) compared EFL males’ and females’ refusals and found slight differences between them since EFL males utilized more refusal strategies and fewer adjuncts than females. Jasim (2017) concluded that EFL female participants used more indirect strategies and adjuncts than EFL male participants, while males utilized more regret than females.

Therefore, this review shows a continuous debate among scholars on the role that gender can play in determining the number and choice of refusals among a group of learners. However, the effect of gender on learners' performance of refusals has very rarely been explored among Arabic EFL or ESL learners in general and has not previously been investigated among Saudi EFL and ESL learners in specific. Hence, the current study aims to fill this gap, focusing on exploring the gender differences among two groups: 1) EFL males and females, and 2) ESL males and females.

Methods
The data was collected using the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which means providing participants with specific written scenarios, identifying the status of the interlocutor, and asking them to respond to each scenario by giving a refusal speech act. This method is preferred in pragmatic studies as it enables researchers to investigate the influence of some factors, e.g. gender (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka,1985). A modified version of Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz's (1990) DCT application was adopted to meet the population of this study, i.e. EFL and ESL students, and to achieve the purpose of this research to investigate the pragmatic differences between the students in academic settings. The DCTs were designed to address all social statuses: scenarios one, five, six, and 10 addressed higher status, scenarios three, four, eight, and 11 addressed equal status, and two, seven, 11, and 12 addressed lower status and were distributed to include 12 objects: four invitations/offers (one, four, seven, and 10), four requests (two, five, eight, and 11) and four suggestions (three, six, nine, and 12) (see Appendix A).

Participants
The 32 participants, males and females, in this study were divided into two groups as follows: 16 Saudi ESL postgraduate students in the United Kingdom (eight male, eight female), and 16 Saudi Arabian EFL postgraduate students in Saudi Arabia (eight male, eight female). The participants were randomly selected, as an online invitation was sent via social media, urging students who were studying in business, computer sciences and financial administration to respond voluntarily to the survey (during July and August 2020). Hence, this would allow participants to respond at
the appropriate time and would be safer to avoid any face-to-face meetings during the global Coronavirus pandemic at the time of conducting this research.

**Data Analysis**

Responses included 824 refusals, which were analysed and identified as strategies and adjuncts, following Beebe et al.’s (1990) model, which was further developed based on the obtained data. For instance, in Beebe et al.’s (1990) study, even though the statements of negative ability/willingness were categorized under direct refusals, they were treated as indirect refusals since they did not include direct ‘No’ or the performative word ‘refuse’. Some new categories were created based on the data produced by the participants, such as ‘using honesty expressions’ (e.g. "actually" and "to be honest"), and ‘past negative experience’ (e.g. "I still feel bad about it"). Furthermore, analysis of the speech act of refusal of each scenario was based on the types of strategies or adjuncts used. For example, the statement "Thank you a lot I appreciate your promotion but I cannot go as I'm interested being in this place" includes three semantic formulas of refusal: one adjunct, which is the use of gratitude and appreciation ("Thank you a lot"), two strategies, which are the use of negative ability and willingness ("but I cannot go"), and the use of excuses, reasons and explanations ("I'm interested being in this place"). Furthermore, a t-test was used to compare the significance of the differences in findings of males and females among each learners groups: EFL and ESL.

**Results**

**The Use of Refusal Strategies among EFL Males and Females**

In the EFL group, males and females were very similar in using direct strategies since both rarely directly refused objects, with four and five instances, respectively. They were also less performative, as opposed to using direct ‘no’, with one out of four instances for males and two out of five instances for females. The statistical procedure t-test also supports this result since no significant difference in the overall use of direct strategies was found between EFL males (M=2, SD=2) and females (M=2.5, SD=.5), t(2)=.44, p=.34, see table one.

However, males and females differed in their use of direct strategies across interlocutors' statuses and objects. EFL males used more direct strategies with lower interlocutors, with three out of four instances, while EFL females used slightly more direct strategies with higher and equal rather than lower status, with two instances out of five for each. EFL males also used more direct strategies with requests, with two out of four instances, while EFL females used more direct strategies with suggestions and invitations and offers rather than requests, with two instances for each. Moreover, t-tests found no significant differences in the use of direct strategies based on interlocutor status between males (M=1.33, SD=2.33) and EFL females (M=1.66, SD=.33), t(4)=.35, p=.37. There were also no significant differences regarding the use of direct strategies based on the type of object between EFL males (M=1.33, SD=.33) and females (M=1.66, SD=.33), t(4)=.70, p=.25, see table one.

Table 1. Comparison of the use of the direct strategies across EFL males and females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The overall use of direct strategies</td>
<td>EFL Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EFL Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EFL Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, while both EFL males and females used more indirect strategies than direct ones, females tended to be more indirect than males, with 218 instances for the former and 152 instances for the latter. It can also be seen that the use of excuses, opinions and explanations was the most frequent strategy among both EFL males (61 instances) and females (73 instances). There were no great differences between males and females in specific use of indirect strategies except for the use of regret, where females used 45 instances while males used only nine instances. Statistically, a t-test showed no significant difference in the overall use of indirect strategies between EFL males (M=7.6, SD=198.04) and females (M=10.9, SD=361.46), t(38)=.62, p=.26, see table two.

In terms of the use of the indirect refusals by males and females across different interlocutor statuses and objects, it was found that males used more indirect refusals with higher status interlocutors (55 out of 152 instances), while females were more indirect when addressing lower statuses (81 out of 218 instances). Statistically, a t-test revealed that there was a significant difference in the use of indirect strategies based on interlocutor status between EFL males (M=50.66, SD=20.33) and females (M=72.66, SD=58.33), t(4)=4.29, p=.006. EFL males and females were similar in being more indirect when refusing requests rather than other objects, but to a different degree, with 61 instances for males and 81 instances for females. This was also statistically significant since a t-test showed a significant difference in the use of indirect strategies based on the type of object between EFL males (M=50.66, SD=122.33) and females (M=72.66, SD=52.33), t(4)=2.88, p=.02, see table two.

### Table 2. Comparison of the use of the indirect strategies across EFL males and females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The overall use of indirect strategies</td>
<td>EFL Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>198.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EFL Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>361.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the indirect strategies among different interlocutor statuses</td>
<td>EFL Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.66</td>
<td>20.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EFL Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.66</td>
<td>58.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the indirect strategies among different objects</td>
<td>EFL Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.66</td>
<td>122.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EFL Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.66</td>
<td>52.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Use of Refusal Strategies among ESL Males and Females

In terms of ESL, males and females used the same number of instances regarding direct refusal strategies, with four for each. They were also similar in not using performative refusals at all. Statistically ESL females and males were also similar since a t-test showed that there was no
significant difference in the overall use of direct strategies between ESL males (M=2, SD=8) and females (M=2, SD=8), t(2)=0, p=.5, see table three.

However, there were slight differences in use of direct strategies with different statuses and objects. ESL females were more direct when refusing lower status interlocutors (two out of four instances) and when refusing suggestions (three out of four instances). ESL males did not use any direct strategy with higher status, but only with equal and lower status (two instances for each), and they also were not direct when refusing requests rather than suggestions and invitations (two instances for each). Moreover, a t-test revealed no meaningful difference in the use of direct strategies with different interlocutors’ statuses between ESL males (M=1.33, SD=1.33) and females (M=1.33, SD=.33), t(4)=0, p=.5. Another t-test was conducted to compare the use of direct strategies with different objects by ESL females and males, which also showed no significant difference since ESL males (M=1.33, SD=1.33) and females (M=1.33, SD=2.33), t(4)=0, p=.5, see table three.

Table 3. Comparison of the use of the direct strategies across ESL males and females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The overall use of direct strategies</td>
<td>ESL Male 8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL Female 8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the direct strategies among different interlocutor statuses</td>
<td>ESL Male 8</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL Female 8</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the direct strategies among different objects</td>
<td>ESL Male 8</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL Female 8</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Greater use of indirect strategies than direct was made by both genders, and females slightly exceeded males in using indirect refusals, with 173 and 168, respectively. The specific use of indirect strategies was not greatly different between ESL males and females, and statistically was not significant since a t-test showed no meaningful difference in the overall use of indirect strategies between ESL males (M=8.4, SD=267.2) and females (M=8.65, SD=232.87), t(38)=.04, p=.48. The use of excuses, opinions and explanations was the most frequent strategy for both males and females with 68 and 60 instances, respectively, see table four.

In terms of the ESL males and females’ use of indirect strategies across different interlocutor statuses and objects, it can be seen that ESL males were more indirect when refusing higher and lower statuses (59 out of 168 instances) while females were more indirect when refusing an equal interlocutor (59 out of 173 instances). Yet, a t-test revealed no significant difference in the use of indirect strategies with different interlocutor status between ESL males (M=56, SD=27) and females (M=57.66, SD=1.33), t(4)=.54, p=.30. ESL males and females were similar in using indirect refusal strategies with requests rather than other objects, with 64 and 63 instances, respectively. Statistically, this is a tiny difference, and thus a t-test showed no significant difference in the use of indirect strategies with different objects between ESL males (M=56, SD=112) and females (M=57.66, SD=46.33), t(4)=.226, p=.41, see table four.

Table 4. Comparison of the use of the indirect strategies across ESL males and females
The Use of Adjuncts by EFL Males and Females

In terms of the use of adjuncts among EFL learners, EFL females used more than double the number of adjuncts used by EFL males, with 36 and 14 instances, respectively. It was found that the use of positive feeling, opinion and agreement statements was the most frequent adjunct used by EFL females, followed by the use of gratitude and appreciation. EFL males used more gratitude and appreciation than positive feeling statements, but the difference was slight, with seven instances of the former and five of the latter. However, a t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in the overall use of adjuncts between EFL males (M=3.5, SD=9.66) and females (M=9, SD=60), t(6)=1.31, p=.11, see table five.

Moreover, the use of adjuncts among different interlocutor statuses and types of objects was also investigated and it was found that EFL females used adjuncts more commonly with higher status (17 out of 36 instances), but males used them with both higher and equal statuses to the same degree (six for each out of 14 instances). It was also found that males and females used more adjuncts with invitations and offers than other objects (seven out of 14 and 16 out of 36 instances, respectively). Even though both genders seem to agree with the use of adjuncts with higher interlocutors and invitations and offers, they differ in the number of instances used with that status and object. Thus, a t-test showed statistically significant differences regarding the use of adjuncts with interlocutor status between EFL males (M=4.66, SD=5.33) and females (M=12, SD=19), t(4)=2.57, p=.03, and a significant difference in the use of adjuncts with objects between EFL males (M=4.66, SD=10.33) and females (M=15.33, SD=4.33), t(4)=4.82, p=.004, see table five.

Table 5. Comparison of the use of adjuncts across EFL males and females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The overall use of indirect strategies</td>
<td>ESL Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the indirect strategies among different interlocutor statuses</td>
<td>ESL Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the indirect strategies among different objects</td>
<td>ESL Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Role of Gender on Saudi English Language Learners’

Alalawi
The Use of Adjuncts by ESL Males and Females

In terms of the use of adjuncts among ESL students, ESL males used slightly more adjuncts than ESL females, with 25 and 20 instances, respectively. The most frequent strategy for ESL males was the use of pause fillers, followed by positive feelings while for ESL females was the use of positive feelings, opinions and agreements. ESL males and females used statements of gratitude and appreciation to the same extent, with six instances for each. An obvious difference between ESL males and females was the use of pause fillers, which were used more commonly by males, while only one instance was used by females. A t-test showed no statistically significant difference regarding the overall use of adjuncts among ESL males (M=6.25, SD=21.58) and females (M=5, SD=35.33), t(6)=.33, p=.37, see table six.

Furthermore, these adjuncts were used by ESL males and females across different statuses and objects similarly, since they used more adjuncts with higher status than with other statuses, with 12 out of 25 and eight out of 20 instances, respectively. They also were similar in using more adjuncts with invitations and offers rather than other objects, with 10 out of 25 instances for males and 8 out of 20 instances for females. They were also similar statistically since a t-test revealed no significant difference in respect to the use of adjuncts across different statuses between ESL males (M=8.33, SD=10.33) and females (M=6.33, SD=4.33), t(4)=.90, p=.20. A t-test also showed no meaningful difference in terms of the use of adjuncts across different objects between ESL males (M=8.33, SD=2.33) and females (M=6.66, SD=2.33), t(4)=1.33, p=.12, see table six.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Comparison of the use of adjuncts across ESL males and females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall use of adjuncts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of adjuncts among different interlocutor statuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of adjuncts among different objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

In terms of the pragmatic difference between EFL and ESL males and females, the study found that EFL and ESL males and females avoided using direct refusal strategies. This finding is widely agreed upon by several studies investigating English language learners of English, such as Arani & Tehrani (2013), Hassani, Mardani, & Dastjerdi (2011) and Parvaresh et al., (2014). Moreover, Arani & Tehrani (2013) also agree with this study that both genders tend to use more nonperformative than performative refusals. In contrast, Wang (2019) found that male learners of English tended to give direct refusals more commonly than females, who preferred indirect refusals. However, all the four studies earlier mentioned were conducted in Iran while Wang's (2019) study was conducted in China, and thus, different contexts and cultures might have led to contrasting results. As Mead (1935) indicated, culture can influence gender behavior, which might affect language and choice of words.
Moreover, the use of more indirect strategies by EFL and ESL females than by males corresponds with Arani & Tehrani (2013), but in both studies the difference was not statistically significant. However, while Wang's (2019) study found that the greater use of indirect refusals by females than males was significant and a sign of a female tendency to be more polite in refusing, this difference was not investigated statistically. Furthermore, EFL and ESL males and females were similar in giving excuses, reasons and explanations as the most frequent indirect refusal. This supports previous studies such as Arani & Tehrani (2013), Hassani et al. (2011) and Wang (2019), which might make the use of this strategy a model for polite refusals. This might be due to a speaker's tendency sometimes to lie rather than to give their real view or feeling (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Another indirect strategy used by EFL females rather than males was regret, which corresponds with Parvaresh et al. (2014) finding. Females' use of regret, such as "sorry", "unfortunately" and "I'm afraid", can be interpreted as apologies, and Tannen (1990) stated that women usually tend to apologize more than men. Regardless of all these differences, statistically, EFL and ESL males and females show no significant differences regarding the overall use of direct and indirect strategies. This is in line with the findings of Arani and Tehrani (2013), Hassani et al. (2011) and Parvaresh et al. (2014).

Furthermore, the study found no meaningful differences between ESL males and females regarding using of direct and indirect strategies across different interlocutor statuses and objects, which is consistent with Hassani et al. (2011) finding. It also found no significant difference between EFL males and females in the use of indirect refusals across statuses and objects, but a meaningful difference was detected in the use of direct strategies, since females were more indirect with lower statuses, while men were more indirect with higher statuses. They were also significantly different in the number of instances used with requests. This finding corresponds with Tuncer & Turhan (2019), who found that females usually tend to be more indirect with lower and equal statuses, but males with higher interlocutors. No previous study has compared genders regarding the use of objects, which might suggest that this area merits further investigation.

In terms of adjuncts, EFL females used more adjuncts than males, but for ESL students, while males used more adjuncts than females, the difference was not great. The result regarding EFL learners corresponds with Hassani et al. (2011), who also found that adjuncts were used more by females than by males. However, they found that positive feelings, opinions and agreements were the most frequent strategies used by both males and females, followed by gratitude and appreciation statements. While the present study agreed that positive feelings, opinions and agreements were the most frequent strategies, it found that this was followed by gratitude and appreciation only for females and not for males. Thoits's (1989) study seems to agree with this study's finding since it stated that women usually tend to express their feelings and emotions more than men, which might also be supported by Simon and Nath (2004), who indicated that females were more likely to express their feelings verbally than males, who preferred to express their feelings behaviourally. Moreover, ESL males used many more pauses than females, which is supported by Binnenpoorte, Bael, Os, & Boves (2005), who stated that men gave more pauses than women, yet they investigated oral speech (telephone dialogue and face-to-face conversation), and thus this might require further research. Furthermore, the present study found no significant difference between EFL and ESL males and females in the overall use of adjuncts. This result is consistent with the findings of research conducted by Parvaresh, Bidaki, & Farahani (2014), who
reported no difference between males and females in terms of the use of adjuncts. Although Hassani et al., (2011) and Parvaresh et al., (2014) investigated EFL learners from the same country, Iran, they reached different results. This difference might lie in that 20 students in the latter study did not define their gender, which might have created a difference in the outcome.

Another interesting finding was that EFL and ESL males and females were similar in using more adjuncts with higher statuses and with invitation and offer objects. This corresponds again with Hassani et al., (2011), who found that females and males used more adjuncts when they addressed higher status interlocutors. Yet, in the present study, EFL and ESL males and females used different numbers of adjuncts with higher status interlocutors and with invitation and offer objects, revealing a significant difference between EFL males and females, but not among ESL learners. Other studies have not discussed this, especially in respect of the objects, which might present a research opportunity.

Nevertheless, two limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the small sample size means that the findings cannot be generalized to all Saudi EFL and ESL postgraduate learners. Second, participants were from three different disciplines, which might have affected the precision of the results. Hence, to obtain more valid and reliable results, this study could be replicated with larger sample size and learners who study in the same discipline.

**Conclusion**

The present study investigated the role of gender in the refusal performances of EFL and ESL learners. It has been found that gender has no meaningful influence on the overall use of direct, indirect strategies and adjuncts. However, there is a significant difference in the use of direct strategies and the number of adjuncts used by EFL males and females across different interlocutor statuses and objects, but not by ESL learners. Furthermore, this study can be expanded in future research by discussing other related topics such as the role of the study environment on males’ or females’ refusals and the relation between learners' refusals production and learning styles: visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinaesthetic.

**About the author**

**Badryah Alalawi** is a current PhD student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Nottingham. She holds an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Nottingham, as well. She is sponsored by Taibah University in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Cultural Bureau in London. She is interested in pragmatics, intercultural communication and health communication.

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**References**


Appendices

Appendix A
The DCTs Scenarios

1. You are a lecturer at a university. The head of the school offers you raise and promotion, but it involves moving to another campus. You do not want to go. Today, the Head of School calls you into his office.

The Head: I would like to offer you an executive position on another campus which 100 kilometers from here. It is a great place and a nice raise comes with the position.

You refuse by saying:

The school head: Well, maybe you should give it some more thought before turning it down.

2. You are a teacher at a university. One of your best students asks to speak with you in private.

Student: As you know, I have attended all my classes since the beginning of the term, and I know you have been pleased with my achievements so far. I really enjoy your classes, but I really need to be absent from the final exam.

You refuse by saying:

Student: Then I guess there is no solution than to attend the exam.

3. You are studying with your classmate at the library. He/she offers you a snack.

You: Thanks, but no thanks. I've been eating like a pig and I feel just terrible. My clothes do not even fit me.

Friend: Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've been telling you about?

You refuse by saying:

Friend: You should try it anyway.

4. A classmate invites you to study group, but you really cannot stand one of the students in this group.

Classmate: How about coming over for a group study Sunday evening? We are having training for next week presentation.

You refuse by saying:

Classmate: O.K. maybe another time.

5. You are a lecturer in a university, and you have a meeting with the Head of the Department that you work in. It is getting to the end of the day and you want to leave work.

The head of the school: If you do not mind, I would like to stay an extra hour or two today so that we can finish up with this work.

You refuse by saying:

The head of the school: That's too bad. I was hoping you could stay.

6. You are in class trying to find the assignment that your teacher just asked for. While you are looking through many papers in your bag your teacher notices you.

Teacher: You know, maybe you should try and organize your papers better. I always divide my papers into different files. Perhaps you should give it a try.

You refuse by saying:
Teacher: Well, it is an idea anyway.
7. You are the head of a school. Your students invite you to have a lunch together and to have a chat together in the breaktime.
The student: We have met during the opening day for us in the school and my classmates and I really would like to invite you to have lunch together and to listen to your advice on how we can do our best in our studies.
You refuse by saying:
The student: Perhaps another time.
8. You are a junior in college. You attend classes regularly and take good notes. Your classmate often misses a class and asks you for the lecture notes.
Classmate: Oh God! We have an exam tomorrow, but I don't have notes from last week. I am sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes once again?
You refuse by saying:
Classmate: O.K. then I guess I will have to ask somebody else.
9. You are having lunch with a classmate in the breaktime and after finishing your lunch, he/she suggests having a piece of cake
Classmate: How about another piece of cake?
You refuse by saying:
10. You are a very good student. One day one of your teachers asks you to come to his/her office
Teacher: Next Sunday, there will be a free trip to Oxford for good students as a prize for their achievements. I know it is short notice, but I am hoping that you can come on the trip. What do you say?
You refuse by saying:
Teacher: That's too bad. I was hoping you would be there.
11. You are the head of a university and one of the staff asked you for a vacation for two weeks to visit his/her family in another place
The staff member: Excuse me, Can I ask for a vacation for just two weeks? I need to visit my family in another country and I cannot wait until August
You refuse by saying:
12. You are a language teacher at a university. It is just about the middle of the term now, and one of your students asks to speak to you.
Student: Ah, excuse me, some of the students were talking after class recently, and we kind of feel that the class would be better if you could give us more practice in conversation and less on grammar.
You refuse by saying:
Student: O.K., it was only a suggestion.
The Role of Gender on Saudi English Language Learners’

Alalawi
A Case Study on the Effectiveness of Applying Content and Language Integrated Learning in an Artificial Intelligence English Reading Course

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Abstract
The present study was a case study on the application of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) for an Artificial Intelligence (AI) English reading course in the Chinese general English education (GEE) context. It aimed to investigate the effectiveness of CLIL in improving EFL learners’ AI general knowledge. It was significant for the practice of applying CLIL in China and provided some recommendations for the teaching of AI English. This study proposed two research questions: 1. What are the effects of CLIL in improving students’ AI general knowledge?; 2. How do students perceive CLIL? An Artificial Intelligence English reading course was conducted as a teaching experiment in a GEE class of 45 students at Chongqing Technology and Business University, China. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied in data collection and data analysis. Research results indicated that Content and Language Integrated Learning effectively improved EFL learners’ AI general knowledge and was a teaching method applicable to most students taking part in the teaching experiment. CLIL was worthy of being further implemented and studied in the Chinese GEE context. Besides, the research results also suggested that AI-related content was feasible in Chinese GEE. Students demonstrated the need to learn both general and professional AI knowledge. AI English was a subject that needs to be further explored.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Artificial Intelligence English reading course, Artificial Intelligence general knowledge, Chinese general English education, Content and Language Integrated Learning

Introduction

Chinese college English education has been undergoing a profound educational reform. General English education (GEE), as a component of general education and college English education in China, is the orientation of College English Teaching Reform. The emphasis of college English teaching is turning from the practice and improvement of English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation to GEE, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and English for Academic Purpose (EAP). This new educational idea focuses more on cultivating students’ social and cultural background in a foreign language, English language used in a specific industry, and English for academic writing and communication purposes.

Among all the GEE courses colleges and universities have provided to undergraduates, English concerning Artificial Intelligence (AI) is nearly a total blank. AI is a cross-edge discipline of natural science and social science. Its fast development and highly-internationalized cooperation ask for talents both with AI background or AI professional knowledge and skills and with English ability that can satisfy their needs for international communication. In this situation, English education should also probe into the possibility and feasibility of involving AI-related content in English language teaching. But up to now, few language textbooks were related to AI, nor has any exploration of English for AI purposes made in China, whether in the field of GEE, ESP, or EAP. The gap between English education and the development of AI economy and AI science and technology is becoming increasingly apparent. It is possible and necessary to explore the integration of AI-related knowledge and English learning, especially in the context of Chinese GEE. For the lack of AI-related courses in the Chinese GEE context, the present study was led by the researcher as an empirical and exploratory study into English for AI purposes under the guidance of CLIL. It hoped to fill the gap of lacking AI-related English courses in the Chinese GEE and further explored the application of CLIL in China. The researcher proposed the notion of ‘AI English’ as opposed to Business English, Legal English, Tourism English, Agriculture English, etc. To explore the effectiveness of applying CLIL in teaching an AI English Reading course in the domain of GEE, this study involved the implementation of an AI English Reading course and proposed two researcher questions which could be formulated as 1. What are the effects of CLIL in improving students’ AI general knowledge?; 2. How do students perceive CLIL?

Literature Review

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a language teaching ideology that originated in Europe in the 1990s. The Council of Europe comes up with the term ‘CLIL’ firstly in its Division of Language Policies, where Professor David Marsh proposes that CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely, the learning of content and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language. It is an alternative to Content-Based Instruction (CBI), which has gained more popularity in the United States and Canada, since they are similar (Lorenzo, 2007; Mi, 2015). CLIL is a dual-
focused teaching method incorporating language into disciplinary content (Coyle, 2007). Thus, it has been thought optimal for second language learning (Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990). The best approach to learning a foreign language is not to study the language itself but to learn the language through the contents conveyed by a specific language (Wolff, 2003). In ELT, CLIL integrates a specific disciplinary or interdisciplinary content into the teaching of English as a foreign language. It represents a significant departure from traditional foreign language teaching methods in that language proficiency is achieved by shifting the focus of instruction from the learning of language to the learning of language through the study of subject matter (Stryker & Leaver, 1997).

Scholars have made studies on CLIL from the angles of the prominence of language objective and content objective (Snow et al., 1989; Short, 2002; Bigelow, 2010; Baecher, Farnsworth, & Ediger, 2014), classroom discourse analysis, and teacher-student interactions and instructions (Gibbons, 2003; Liebscher & Dailey-O’Cain, 2005; Hoare, 2010; Evnitskaya & Morton, 2011; Huang, 2011; Jakonen & Morton, 2015), teaching strategies to promote CLIL inherent patterns (Lingley, Nunn, & Otlowksi, 2006; Lorenzo, 2007; Lyster, 2007; Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Orteiza, 2012; Short, 2012), and CLIL teacher development (Arkoudis, 2005; Echevarria, 2009; Cammarate & Tedick, 2012; Short et al., 2012). Chinese scholars have mainly studied the effectiveness of CLIL and the development of learners’ language skills (Chang, Liu, & Deng, 2009; Yuan, 2012).

In the Chinese foreign language teaching context, CLIL has been gaining more and more attention from educators. It has been applied by many teachers in teaching college English. CLIL teaching model can provide instruction in College English Teaching Reform in China, and it is necessary and feasible to implement CLIL in college English education. This study adopted CLIL for the teaching of the AI English Reading course. It was a localized application of CLIL in teaching Chinese GEE courses.

Method
This study used both the quantitative data analysis method and the qualitative data analysis method. All data were collected from two English proficiency tests, a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire, and two one-to-one semi-structured interviews by the researcher with the assistance of two trained and qualified assistants. The AI general knowledge performance was measured by the scores a student got on the English proficiency tests before and after the course. Data from the 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire and the one-to-one semi-structured interviews showed students’ perceptions of their learning of AI general knowledge. Data analysis methods used in this study were percentage, mean, standard deviation, paired-samples t-test, Pearson correlation coefficients, one-sample K-S test, Mann-Whitney U test, and the thematic analysis.
Participants

The participants of the present study were 45 undergraduate students at Chongqing Technology and Business University (CTBU). This study used convenience sampling. Students chose the AI English Reading course at their will as a compulsory optional course according to the English teaching program of CTBU.

Research Instruments

English Proficiency Tests

Before the teaching experiment, the researcher developed two English proficiency tests, EPT1 and EPT2, to assess students’ AI general knowledge before and after taking the AI English Reading course. Both tests had 50 marks in total and followed the same format: Multiple choice questions (full 10 marks of 10 questions), Noun explanations (full 20 marks of 4 terms), and Essay-type questions (full 20 marks of 1 essay writing). Both tests were piloted by another ten students and reviewed and adapted by three ELT experts.

Questionnaire

One 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire was developed by the researcher to investigate students’ perceptions of their AI general knowledge and CLIL. The questionnaire was piloted by another ten students and examined by the same three ELT experts, and finally adopted by the researcher according to the pilot study feedback. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert Scale including 10 items, with each item involving five choices of strongly disagree (1 point), disagree (2 points), neither agree nor disagree (3 points), agree (4 points), and strongly agree (5 points). Items in the questionnaire are illustrated in Table one as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I think AI is interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I like the AI English Reading textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I think the AI English Reading textbook is helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I think the AI English Reading textbook is engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I like the AI English Reading course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I think the AI English Reading course is helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I think the AI English Reading course is engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I like the teaching method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My AI general knowledge is improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My vocabulary of AI is improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I gained more insight into AI applications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One-to-one Semi-structured Interviews

The one-to-one semi-structured interview was conducted after the questionnaire by the researcher with five randomly chosen students of their perceptions of their acquisition of AI general knowledge and CLIL. The interview was mainly about the following three questions: 1.
How do you feel about your AI general knowledge after taking the course?; 2. How do you feel about the teaching method applied in the course? 3. How do you feel about the AI English reading textbook and course? The second one-to-one semi-structured interview was conducted on specific students about the reason why they chose totally negative answers to some of the items in the questionnaire.

Research Procedures

The whole study included four phases that can be seen in figure one as follows.

![Research design](image1.png)

**Figure 1** Research design

Teaching Procedure

The teaching experiment lasted for one academic semester, which was 16 weeks, according to the college English education syllabus in CTBU. One course of 90 minutes would be taught for one unit at a time in one week. Each class would follow the same five-step teaching procedure, which can be seen in figure two as follows.

![Teaching procedure](image2.png)

**Figure 2. Teaching procedure**
Such a teaching procedure was a progressive circle among which each step strengthened the former and introduced the next. Finally, it formed a systematic and integral teaching program for the whole teaching experiment.

**Research Findings**

After the teaching experiment, 39 students provided effective data for the present study, including one set of quantitative data for students’ performance of AI general knowledge in both EPT1 and EPT2, one set of quantitative data for questionnaire, and one set of qualitative data for interviews. All the quantitative data would be tested by authorized computer programs, including percentage, mean, standard deviation, paired-samples t-test, Pearson correlation coefficient, one-sample K-S test, and Mann-Whitney U test. The qualitative data would be analyzed manually by the researcher with thematic analysis. All research results are illustrated as follows.

**Statistical Results for Students’ Performance in EPT1 and EPT2**

The descriptive statistical results of students’ performance of AI general knowledge in EPT1 in pretest are shown in Table two as follows, with ‘Toral 1’ referring to the total scores of EPT1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice questions</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun explanations</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay-type question</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive statistical results of students’ performance of AI general knowledge in EPT2 in posttest are shown in Table three as follows, with ‘Toral 2’ referring to the total scores of EPT1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice questions</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun explanations</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>4.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay-type question</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17.08</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive statistical results of EPT2 showed an improvement in students’ command of AI general knowledge in comparison with that of EPT1. But it should be further measured whether this improvement was significant.

**Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficients and One-sample K-S Test**

Before students’ improvement in EPT2 after the teaching experiment was measured, the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to test the correlation between students’ scores for
‘Multiple choice questions, ‘Noun explanations’, and ‘Essay-type questions’ in both EPT1 and EPT2 respectively, and between their total scores for both tests. The results of Pearson correlation coefficients for students’ scores for each question type and total scores (referring to Total 3) for both tests can be seen in Table four as follows.

Table 4. Pearson correlation coefficients for EPT1 and EPT2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice questions</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.556**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun explanations</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay-type question</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.536**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.325*</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)  
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Pearson correlation coefficients in table four showed that students’ performance on ‘Multiple choice question’ in EPT1 was significantly correlated with ‘Multiple choice question’ in EPT2 (r=0.556, p=0.000<0.01). The scores for ‘Essay-type question’ in EPT1 were also found to be positively correlated with that in EPT2 (r=0.536, p=0.000<0.01). Students’ total performance in EPT1 was also positively correlated with EPT2 (r=0.325, p=0.043<0.05). No correlation was found between students’ performance on ‘Noun explanations’ (r=0.047, sig.=0.778).

The of Pearson correlation coefficients for both tests showed that paired-samples t-tests could be applied to compare students’ performance on ‘Multiple choice questions, ‘Essay-type questions’, and their total scores. No correlation was found for ‘Noun explanations’ between pretest and posttest, which meant that it was not applicable to use a paired-sample t-test in comparing students’ performance on this question type. Before further processing of these two sets of data of ‘Noun explanations’, their normal distributions were tested respectively. One-sample K-S test was applied to test the normal distributions of ‘Noun explanations’ in EPT1 and EPT2 because whether the data distributions were normal might determine the statistical analysis method for comparing these two sets of data. Table five presents the results of the one-sample K-S test for students’ performance on ‘Noun explanations’. N1 stood for ‘Noun explanations’ of EPT1 and N2 stood for ‘Noun explanations’ of EPT2.

Table 5 One-sample K-S test for ‘Noun explanations’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>N2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal parameters&lt;sup&gt;a,b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.4872</td>
<td>6.4103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.73010</td>
<td>4.95622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most extreme differences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>-.107</td>
<td>-.098</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a. Test distribution is Normal
b. Calculated from data
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results of the one-sample K-S test for students’ performance on ‘Noun Explanation’ were not normally distributed (Sig.=0.000<0.01 [EPT1] and Sig.=0.026<0.05 [EPT2]), which meant that independent-samples t-test was not suitable either to be applied to measure these two sets of data. In that case, the researcher adopted the Mann-Whitney U test to analyze students lied to measure these two sets of data.

Results of Paired-samples T-tests

Paired-samples t-tests were applied to show the differences between students’ performance on ‘Multiple choice questions’, ‘Essay-type question’, and the total ‘AI general knowledge’ in EPT1 and EPT2. Table six presents the results of paired-samples t-tests for these three parts, with ‘Total 4’ referring to the total scores of both tests.

Table 6 Paired-samples t-tests for ‘AI general knowledge’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice questions</td>
<td>-1.35897</td>
<td>1.47768</td>
<td>.23662</td>
<td>-5.743</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay-type question</td>
<td>-1.94872</td>
<td>2.01244</td>
<td>.32225</td>
<td>-6.047</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 4</td>
<td>-7.23077</td>
<td>6.10203</td>
<td>.97711</td>
<td>-7.400</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated in Table six, there were significant differences between mean scores for ‘Multiple choice questions’, ‘Essay-type question’ and the total performance in EPT1 and EPT2: ‘Multiple choice questions’ (t=-5.743, p=.000<.05); ‘Essay-type question’ (t=-6.047, p=.000<.05); and total scores (t=-7.400, p=.000<.05). All the t values were negative, which meant that data of either question type and total performance collected from EPT2 were larger than EPT1. The results showed that the differences in students’ performance on EPT1 and EPT2 were statistically significant. After the teaching of the AI English Reading course, students’ performance on ‘Multiple choice questions’ and ‘Essay-type question’, and students’ total performance on ‘AI general knowledge’ varied to a great extent when compared with before the class. The comparison of mean scores for either question type (mean ['Multiple choice questions’ in pretest]=4.10; mean ['Multiple choice questions’ in posttest]=5.46; mean ['Essay-type question’ in pretest]=3.26; mean ['Essay-type question’ in posttest]=5.21), and for total ‘AI general knowledge’ (mean [pretest]=9.85; mean [posttest]=17.08) also showed that students’ acquisition of AI general knowledge had been improved a lot.
In ‘Multiple choice question’ of EPT2, more students got scores in questions about Strong AI (question 1 with 27 correct answers), AI movie works (question 2 with 30 correct answers), machine learning (question 3 with 34 correct answers), natural language processing (question 5 with 27 correct answers) and AI products – drones (question 9 with 25 correct answers). When compared with their performance on ‘Multiple choice questions’ in EPT1, where students got lower scores for AI conceptual problems such as speech recognition (question 3 with 13 correct answers), AI definition (question 6 with 8 correct answers), AI schools (question 8 with 5 correct answers) and natural language processing (question 10 with 9 correct answers), students did better in similar AI knowledge categories. But in ‘Multiple choice questions’ of EPT2, students also showed a deficiency in knowledge of AI applications, namely, the functions AI technology could realize, especially in specific industries. The analysis of students’ answers to ‘Multiple choice questions’ in both tests found that after taking the AI English Reading course, students had a deeper understanding and better command of AI general knowledge. They acquired a better understanding of AI-related concepts though their knowledge of AI applications and specific technological functions of AI still fell short.

In ‘Essay-type question’ of EPT2, more students could at least express something about their reflections on AI, with five students getting the lowest 2 scores. In contrast to their performance on this question type in EPT1, where six students submitted a total blank paper, after attending the course, no blank paper was submitted, and all students shared their insights into AI more or less, though with different levels. Besides, more students provided longer writing lengths in this question type in EPT2. Eighteen students provided more than 120 words, among whom two students wrote between 200-250 words, and six students wrote between 150-200 words. Fifteen students provided between 100-120 words, and the rest wrote no more than 100 words. While in EPT1, only five students wrote more than 100 words but less than 120 words, five students wrote between 80-100 words, and the rest wrote no more than 80 words. The ability to write more also suggested that students might have acquired more knowledge of AI, in which case they could express more of their reflections on AI. But a further detailed analysis of students’ writing also found that though students could provide more viewpoints on AI, they still lacked deep enough thinking about AI.

The results of paired-samples t-tests for ‘Multiple choice questions’, ‘Essay-type question’, and total scores for ‘AI general knowledge’ of EPT1 and EPT2 indicated that statistically, after taking the AI English Reading course, students’ performance in EPT2 showed an improvement when compared with their performance in EPT1, which partly provided positive evidence for the research question of the present study. The results partially supported that the AI English Reading course effectively enhanced students’ AI general knowledge.
Results of Mann-Whitney U test

Students’ scores for ‘Noun explanations’ in EPT1 and EPT2 were found to have no correlation, which meant that it was not suitable to measure these two sets of data with a paired-samples t-test. These two sets of data were not normally distributed either, which meant that the independent-samples t-test was neither applicable to be applied to measure the difference between students’ performance on ‘Noun explanations’ in both tests. A nonparametric test, the Mann-Whitney U test, was adopted to analyze these two sets of nonnormal distribution data. Table seven presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for students’ performance on ‘Noun explanations’ in EPT1 and EPT2.

Table 7. Mann-Whitney U test for ‘noun explanations’

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Test Statistics

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a. Grouping Variable: Pretest and Posttest

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test for ‘Noun explanations’ in table seven showed that the difference between students’ performance on ‘Noun explanations’ in EPT1 and EPT2 was statistically significant ($Z=-3.766$, $p=0.000<0.01$), which meant that students’ performance on ‘Noun explanations’ in EPT2 was significantly improved when compared with their performance on this question type in EPT1. But a further detailed analysis of students’ answers also indicated that students still displayed different levels of understanding of various categories of AI general knowledge. Students got higher scores for terms concerning AI concepts such as ‘Machine learning’ (totally 76 marks) and ‘Expert system’ (a totally 69 marks), which were basic technologies or concepts of AI. Students got lower scores for terms concerning AI applications such as ‘Traveling salesman problem’ (totally 50 scores) and ‘Monte Carlo tree search (totally 44 scores). This finding corresponded to the result reflected in students’ performance on ‘Multiple choice questions’ in EPT2.

Generally speaking, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for ‘Noun explanations’ also partly answered the research question, and partially supported that the AI English Reading course effectively enhanced students’ AI general knowledge.
Results of Questionnaire

After students had finished EPT2, the researcher conducted the questionnaire to collect data on students’ perceptions of the AI English Reading textbook and course and students’ self-cognition of their AI general knowledge. The descriptive statistics of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix A.

As could be seen in Appendix A, the mean values of all items were larger than the median 3, which indicated that after taking the AI English Reading course, students showed general positive attitudes to items in the questionnaire. But apart from their integral acknowledgement of the interestingness of AI, there were still a few students who had negative attitudes to their preference for the AI English Reading textbook and the course, the usefulness and interestingness of the textbook and the course, the teaching method, and their gains in taking the course. After checking the questionnaire, the researcher purposely invited students who showed negative attitudes in the questionnaire to take one more one-to-one semi-structured interview to investigate their reasons.

Results of Interviews

With thematic analysis, students’ transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed by the researcher manually. The main findings of question 1, ‘How do you feel about your AI general knowledge after taking the course?’, were illustrated as follows.

- A generally positive attitude to the improvement of AI general knowledge was reported, especially in AI concepts, AI-related jargon, and AI products such as drones and games;
- AI general knowledge taught in the course was generally labeled as useful, learnable, and systematic;
- Some students reported that they had gained inspiration and insights into the integration of AI and their majors;
- Some students reported that their accumulation of English vocabulary was improved;
- One student reported uncertainty about the improvement of AI general knowledge because he lacked inner motivation and showed indifference and disinterest in the course;

The main findings of question 2, ‘How do you feel about the teaching method applied in the course?’, were illustrated as follows.

- Most students showed a preference for the teaching method, but two students also mentioned that they did not like the teaching method because teaching all in English was difficult for them to follow the course and it greatly did harm their interests in taking the course;
- More high-tech teaching methods and teaching appliances should be used in the course, such as MOOCs, online courses, video clips, electronic books, learning software, apps, etc.;
- An intelligent teaching environment composed of high-tech teaching appliances could facilitate students’ learning and provide a vivid learning experience;
- It would be better if instructions and exercises of language knowledge points could be added to the teaching process;

The main findings of question 3, ‘How do you feel about the AI English reading textbook
and course?’, were illustrated as follows.

j. One student reported the timeliness of AI general knowledge involved in the course needed to be improved, and the course content should keep updated with the fast development of AI.

k. Practice courses might help teach students the application of AI in a more vivid way, and they should be added to the curriculum;

l. The length of text passages should be shortened to make them more readable;

m. After-class exercises in the textbook were not necessary.

Students who were purposely invited to take one more one-to-one semi-structured interview after the researcher’s check on the questionnaire mainly provided feedback as follows.

n. Four students held a totally negative attitude toward some aspects of the AI English Reading textbook and course for too much load;

o. Two students proposed that though AI was influential and popular at present, everyone did not need to learn;

p. One student lost interest in taking the course for too much time to be spent after class to accomplish homework;

q. One student mentioned that the reason why he took the course was purely to gain the two credits necessary for graduation.

r. One student mentioned that the teaching content could be more professional.

Generally speaking, students held a positive attitude toward their improvement of AI general knowledge and showed a preference for the teaching method. They still provided many productive suggestions for the course.

Discussion

The quantitative findings of EPT1 and EPT2 showed from the above statistical analysis results that students’ scores in EPT2 were higher than their scores in EPT1 with a statistical significance at a 0.01 level, whether each question type or the total scores. The findings indicated that students improved their AI general knowledge after taking the AI English Reading course. Students were more skilful in answering questions concerning AI development, AI products, and AI basic concepts especially related to language, but least in more professional AI knowledge such as AI algorithms and AI application in specific industries. Besides, students also showed a deficiency in their ability to acquire deep insights into AI.

Further detailed analysis of students’ test answers also showed that students had a better command of knowledge concerning AI concepts and AI products after attending the AI English Reading course, which could be seen in students’ performance on ‘Multiple choice question’ and ‘Noun explanations’ in EPT2. In ‘Multiple choice question’, more students got scores in questions about Strong AI (question 1 with 27 correct answers), AI movie works (question 2 with 30 correct answers), machine learning (question 3 with 34 correct answers), natural language processing (question 5 with 27 correct answers) and AI products – drones (question 9 with 25 correct answers). When compared with their performance on ‘Multiple choice questions’ in EPT1, where students
got lower scores for AI conceptual problems such as speech recognition (question 3 with 13 correct answers), AI definition (question 6 with 8 correct answers), AI schools (question 8 with 5 correct answers) and natural language processing (question 10 with 9 correct answers), students did better in similar AI knowledge categories. But in ‘Multiple choice questions’ of EPT2, students also showed a deficiency in knowledge of AI applications, namely, the functions AI technology could realize, especially in specific industries. The analysis of students’ answers to ‘Multiple choice questions’ in EPT1 and EPT2 found that after taking the AI English Reading course, students had a deeper understanding and a better command of AI general knowledge. They acquired a better understanding of AI-related concepts though their knowledge of AI applications and specific technological functions still fell short.

Further detailed analysis of students’ test answers to ‘Noun explanation’ found that though students did much better for this question type in EPT2 than in EPT1 ($t=-6.05$, $p=.000<.05$), which showed an overall improvement in students’ performance, they still displayed different levels of understanding of various categories of AI general knowledge. Students got higher scores for terms concerning AI concepts such as ‘Machine learning’ (totally 76 marks) and ‘Expert system’ (totally 69 marks), which were basic technologies or concepts of AI. Students got lower scores for terms concerning AI applications such as ‘Traveling salesman problem’ (totally 50 scores) and ‘Monte Carlo tree search’ (totally 44 scores). This finding corresponded to the result reflected in students’ performance on ‘Multiple choice questions’ in EPT2.

Further detailed analysis of students’ answers to ‘Essay-type question’ in EPT2 suggested that students could at least express something about their reflections on AI, with five students getting the lowest 2 scores. In contrast to their performance on this question type in EPT1, where six students submitted a total blank paper, after attending the course, no blank paper was submitted, and all students shared their insights into AI more or less, though at different levels. Besides, more students provided longer writing length in this question type of EPT2. Eighteen students provided more than 120 words, and among whom two students wrote between 200-250 words, and six students wrote between 150-200 words. Fifteen students provided between 100 and 120 words, and the rest wrote no more than 100 words for this question type of EPT2. While in EPT1, only five students wrote more than 100 words but less than 120 words, five students wrote between 80-100 words, and the rest wrote no more than 80 words. The ability to write more also suggested that students might have acquired more knowledge of AI, in which case they could express more of their reflections on AI. But a further detailed analysis of students’ writing also found that though students could provide more viewpoints on AI, they still lacked deep enough thinking about AI.

The results of paired-samples t-tests for ‘Multiple choice questions’, ‘Essay-type question’, and total scores for ‘AI general knowledge’, and the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for ‘Noun explanations’ in both tests indicated that statistically, after taking the AI English Reading course.
students’ performance on EPT2 was improved when compared with their performance on EPT1, which provided positive evidence for research question 1: How effective is the AI English Reading course in enhancing students’ AI general knowledge? The results supported that the AI English Reading course effectively enhanced students’ AI general knowledge.

The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire and the thematic analysis of the interviews also showed that students had a generally positive attitude to the acquisition of their AI general knowledge after taking the course. In general, students interviewed mentioned that they had improved their knowledge of AI development and praised highly of the systemicity and learnability of the AI general knowledge due to the explanation of AI schemas. But to some students, the improvement did not meet their expectations. Some students gained inspiration and insights into AI, and constructed their own AI schemas, which were significant meanings of the course. Most of them also admitted the value of the AI English reading course (usefulness). Besides, some students’ English language ability (vocabulary) was also improved. Some students explained the lack of inner motivations (indifference and disinterest) leading to their underperformance in their acquisition of AI general knowledge. And, the timeliness of AI general knowledge involved in the course also needed to be improved. The results of interview 2 also demonstrated students’ positive attitudes to researcher question 1 and provided productive suggestions for research question 2. Besides, students also provided meaningful and constructive suggestions for the improvement of the localization of the teaching method – CLIL, and for the development of AI-related English courses under the GEE context in China, especially the decrease of the difficulty, the timely update of AI general knowledge and the trade-off of Chinese-English in-class teaching language.

In summary, the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data collected indicated the effectiveness of the AI English Reading course. It was reasonable to conclude that the implementation of the AI English Reading course was effective in enhancing students’ AI general knowledge. But there still existed problems in students’ acquisition of AI general knowledge and their insights into AI. Firstly, students’ AI general knowledge was unbalanced in their different levels of command and different domains of AI. Students’ personal interests, their different majors, and the time consumed all influenced their command of AI general knowledge. Secondly, students’ understanding of AI general knowledge was still comprehensive. Because AI was a domain covering a mass of knowledge and with rich contents, it seemed explicable that students lacked some AI general knowledge such as conceptual problems of AI technologies and algorithms, and their applications. Thirdly, students’ insights into AI were not as profound as expected. Though all students showed deeper insights into AI when compared with before the course, their perceptions of AI and its development in the future still remained at a superficial level, which in fact could be attributed to their incomprehensive understanding of AI general knowledge and lack of in-depth thinking. Fourthly, some students still lacked inner motivation of
learning AI general knowledge. They showed quite a lot of indifference and disinterest in AI. This study only probed into the effectiveness of CLIL on improving students’ AI general knowledge in a very fundamental way. The improvement of students' English language ability was left without being investigated. Further studies can be made on the integration of AI knowledge and English learning. Besides, more applications of CLIL in the Chinese GEE context should also be explored.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the implementation of CLIL in Chinese GEE courses. Compared with the initial level of their command of AI general knowledge before the course, the overall performance of students’ AI general knowledge after the course was improved. The findings of this study indicated that it was possible and practical to implement CLIL in Chinese GEE courses. The theme of AI was valuable content that could be included in GEE. Besides, students also demonstrated a need for professional AI-related English learning, and ESP or EAP for only AI purposes remained a total blank up to now. To benefit from the cultivation of AI talents, whether professional AI English should be constructed to help cultivate well-rounded AI talents was still a theme that needed to be further studied.

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References


### Appendices

#### Descriptive statistics for questionnaire

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Applying Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) on Factors Affecting Language Students’ Desire to Learn

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Abstract
This study examines factors affecting students’ desire to learn the English language using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). This is to explain and predict students’ desire to learn. For this purpose, a questionnaire survey was conducted at two public universities in Malaysia and one in Thailand. The questionnaires were developed based on Gardner’s (2004) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. Only four subscales of the instrument were chosen for this study. These were: desire to learn, instrumental motivation, foreign language anxiety and attitude towards foreign language. It was found that although Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety and Instrumental Motivation have small predictive relevance on Desire to Learn the English language, they are crucial in explaining the students’ desire to learn the language. The study indicates that the model is sufficiently reliable and consistent. When the groups were compared, the relationship between Instrumental Motivation and Desire to Learn was higher between International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) students but the difference is not significant where IIUM and Naresuan University (NU) students were concerned. This study serves to model a quantitative empirical research method to explain and predict factors affecting desire to learn.

Keywords: Attitudes towards foreign language, desire to learn, foreign language anxiety, instrumental motivation; Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)

Introduction

This study aims to explain and predict students’ desire to learn using quantitative empirical research that is yet to gain popularity in language research, that is, the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Three of the well-known factors that can affect students’ desire to learn are their attitude towards the language, level of language anxiety and also motivation in learning the language (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Brown, 2000; Cho, 2013; Fan & Feng, 2012; Sultan & Hussain, 2010; Zhang, Dai & Wang, 2020). Desire to learn is a latent variable that is difficult to observe directly. The identification of factors that strongly affect students’ desire to learn can indicate which variables to prioritize in the efforts to improve their proficiency in the language. A number of studies have been done on motivation to learn, foreign language anxiety and attitude towards foreign language. However, it is not known how strong do they explain the desire to learn. Hence, this research is to determine the cause-effect relations between desire to learn and instrumental motivation, foreign language anxiety and attitude towards foreign language.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was developed in the mid-1970s, and has been widely utilised in recent years in various fields such as psychology, economics, sociology and tourism. The two types of estimation techniques used in SEM approach are the covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM has many advantages which include dealing with small samples, theory development, prediction, avoidance of inadmissible solutions and factor indeterminacy. Previous research used the Multiple Group Analysis (MGA) to demonstrate the differences between groups in marketing, tourism and technology acceptance among others. SPSS version 24.0 is used for descriptive analysis results, followed by SmartPLS version 3.3.2 to perform the procedures under PLS-SEM (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). SmartPLS 3.0 provides both measurement and structural model estimations. The software also provides PLS-MGA for Multiple Group Analysis in order to analyse group differences in hypothetical relations. The comparisons between groups are essential from a theoretical and practical perspective as it avoids inaccurate deductions. This study uses the PLS-SEM to analyse the cause-effect relations between the desire to learn and instrumental motivation, foreign language anxiety and attitude towards foreign language among three groups of language learners.

Literature Review

Attitudes towards Foreign Language

Attitude can influence learning (Gardner, 1985; Cahill, 2018). In the context of language learning, a positive attitude towards the language and learning itself can have a positive impact on language learning outcomes (Brown, 2000; Chamber, 1999; Gardner, 1985). This is supported by research findings including those from the extensive studies by Gardner and Lambert (1972) which revealed that positive attitudes toward language enhance proficiency. Other similar findings were also reported in a later study by Gardner (1985) and also by other more recent studies including by Ahmed (2015), Coleman, Strafield & Hagan (2003) and Getie (2020). Brown (2000) believes that negative attitude can be changed through exposure to reality, for example, the actual experience of communicating with native speakers. It was found that the more EFL learners interact with English native speakers, the more they have a desire to learn English. With favourable attitudes towards learning English together with more exposure to a language rich environment, learners can maximise their linguistics achievement (Khorsheed, 2021). Therefore, students’
attitude towards the target language influences how much they desire to achieve their goals and to the effort applied in learning.

There are three dimensions of attitude namely, cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Wenden, 1991). In the context of language learning, the cognitive component refers to the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the language; the affective component deals with the individual’s feeling and emotions towards the language; and the behavioral component covers the individual’s behavior or actions towards the language. Brown (1994) asserts that “Attitudes… develop early in childhood and are the result of parents’ and peers’ attitudes, contact with people who are different in any number of ways, and interacting affective factors in the human experience” (p. 168). This statement signifies that there are many stimulants that shape the attitude of an individual. A study by Sellick and Bury (2018), for example, found significant differences in attitudes towards studying a foreign language between students with Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) and non-CHC groups, but the final grades awarded to the students from the different countries were not consistently significantly different. Since attitudes are learnt and not genetic and inherited (Gardner, 1985), teachers can help shape students’ attitudes towards the language they are learning by facilitating their learning process.

**Instrumental Motivation**

To be proficient in a language, learners need to be motivated to learn the language (Alizadeh, 2016). Students lacking motivation face learning difficulties resulting in a lower academic achievement (Shan, 2020). A student may simultaneously be instrumentally and integratively motivated to learn (Moinivaziri, 2009).

Chee Hong and Ganapathy (2017) studied instrumental and integrative motivation impact on English language learning performance of secondary school students. It was found that the students were more instrumentally than integratively motivated, and the former also had a greater impact on the students’ English language learning. Sadighi and Maghsudi (2000) examined the impact of integrative and instrumental motivation on English proficiency of the EFL learners in Iran. The results obtained from this study demonstrated a significant difference between the means of the English proficiency scores of integratively motivated learners and the instrumentally motivated ones. Other research that demonstrated the effect of instrumental motivation on language learning include by Al-Ta’ani (2018), Damavand (2012), Ivanova, Kirova, Kuzmanovska & Tasevska (2018), and Lambani and Nndwamoto (2018). These studies show that in an EFL environment instrumental motivation is usually the stronger reason for choosing to do English language programme. Hence this study will focus only on instrumental motivation to determine how it relates to their desire to learn.

Instrumental motivation is learning for anticipated benefits (Gardner et al., 1983). The student is instrumentally motivated when learning the language for practical reasons including to pass the exam, to pursue higher education, to get a reward, to get a job and to advance in his/her career (Aspuri, Samad, Fitriani & Samad, 2019). Kumar (2021) suggested that teachers need to provide realistic goals and proper incentives to assist students to engage in the EFL classroom that results in a desire to learn. Brown (2000) claimed that compared to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is often weaker because of its addictiveness and dependency. Students tend to study
longer when the incentive is not removed (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). Thus, being an extrinsic drive to learning, instrumental motivation needs to be initiated and constantly maintained or strengthened. However, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are not mutually exclusive.

**Foreign Language Anxiety**

Another contributing factor to language learners’ language performance is their level of foreign language anxiety (Dordinejad & Ahmadabad, 2014). In fact, it has been claimed as one of the main barriers to successful language learning (Alrabai, 2014; Wu, 2010). When a learner is anxious, it stops information from reaching the language acquisition area in a learner’s brain (Krashen, 1982). Learning also becomes less enjoyable once a learner is anxious (Riasati, 2011). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) define foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). MacIntyre (2017) lists three factors to language anxiety which are academic, cognitive and social. By academic, the learners’ excessive concern to communicate competently using the language orally and in writing leads to apprehension especially in a test setting as they do not want to be negatively evaluated (Darmawangsa, 2020; Horwitz et al., 1986). As for the cognitive factor, the learners’ negative perception of their own linguistic competence has been attributed as the main cause for anxiety (Latif, 2007; MacIntyre, 2017) while socially, the fear of being laughed at is found to be the main reason for anxiety (MacIntyre, 2017). The fear of failing to perform can occur in both in-class and out-of-classroom contexts. An environment that is conducive and supportive for language skills development can reduce learners’ language anxiety (Horwitz, 2001; Mak, 2011; Woodrow, 2006).

Two distinctive types of foreign language anxiety are facilitating and debilitating (Alpert & Haber, 1960). The former benefits language learners as it motivates them to perform academically and emotionally, while the latter inhibits effective and efficient acquisition of language. When the level of anxiety goes beyond its optimum level it results in avoidance behaviour (Scovel, 1978). The effects of foreign language anxiety to language proficiency have been studied quite extensively, and most of the studies focused on the detrimental effect of language anxiety. These include its effect on motivation and language learning. Wang and Zhan’s (2020) study, for example, found that test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation affected motivation and self-regulated English learning. In another study, Zhen and Cheng (2018) revealed in one of their findings that foreign language anxiety was a significant negative predictor of language achievement. Language anxiety may not only affect language performance but may also be a result of poor command of the target language (Young, 1986). A study by Seviç and Backus (2017), for instance, indicated that limited linguistic capabilities led to language anxiety among Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands. In another study, Hashemi (2011) also found that language learning difficulties, among other factors, can trigger language anxiety.

It appears that there is a relationship between language anxiety and motivation across all levels of language proficiency of learners. It has been pointed out that higher achievers have least anxiety with a higher level of motivation whereas lower achievers exhibit higher language anxiety with low level of motivation. Students with high anxiety will not be motivated to learn and have difficulties in acquiring language (Sari, 2017). In addition, when comparing language learners across different language levels, it was found there was a relatively strong association between the
language anxiety and learner attitude, language anxiety and motivational intensity, and language anxiety and the desire to learn. For beginners, overall language anxiety had a higher correlation in the order of motivational intensity, learner attitude, and the desire to learn. However, for advanced learners, overall language anxiety had a greater relation in the following order: learner attitude, the desire to learn, and motivational intensity (Liu & Cheng, 2014). It appears anxiety of EFL learners is to be found and can be significant in the learning process and can have a substantial impact among different groups and different levels.

Desire to Learn

One of the factors influencing students’ success in learning a language is their desire to learn (Seven, 2020; Yeh Wai Man, 2014). With a strong desire to learn, learners would strive to improve their performance. The desire to learn can be influenced by either intrinsic or extrinsic factors. In his study on the desire to learn English, Piechurska-Kuciel (2016) indicated that English language learners who had a negative perception of learning English did not have the desire to learn the language, conversely, those with the desire to learn showed a positive attitude. Language learners with a high level of self-perceived proficiency were found to have a strong desire to learn the target language. A strong correlation was found between self-perceived proficiency and their final grades. Enthusiasm to learn can also be influenced by socioeconomic status such as school geographical location, classroom learning setting, and parental supports (Li, Peng, Yang & Chen, 2020; Muslim, Hamied, & Sukyadi, 2020; Win, 2002). Pham (2021) confirmed that desire to learn a language plays a crucial role in language learning. Students who have the desire to learn are better engaged in learning and are more likely to achieve their goals.

To assess the effect of instrumental motivation, foreign language anxiety and attitudes towards foreign language on students’ desire to learn using PLS-SEM, there is a need to have a conceptual model. This model is developed based on manifest variables in three of the categories listed in Gardner’s (2004) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), namely instrumental motivation, foreign language anxiety and attitude towards foreign language.

Methods

To estimate the interrelationships of constructs with students’ desire to learn the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was adopted. Items from four of the subscales in Gardner’s (2004) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery was adapted in the study, and these were: desire to learn, instrumental motivation, foreign language anxiety and attitude towards foreign language. Items with acceptable factor loadings were maintained in the analysis. Convenience sampling was used in the study where questionnaires were distributed to the undergraduate students who were majoring in the English language. Their participation was on a voluntary basis and they remained anonymous.

Participants

English language majors from three public universities in Malaysia and Thailand were chosen for the study. A total of 102 English majors from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 95 from University Technology MARA, Malaysia (UiTM) and 110 from
Naresuan University, Thailand (NU) responded to the survey. Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents. Of the 307 students, 85% were females and the rest were males.

### Table 1. Respondents’ profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>IIUM</th>
<th>UiTM</th>
<th>NU</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Male</td>
<td>12 (3.9)</td>
<td>12 (3.9)</td>
<td>21 (6.9)</td>
<td>45 (14.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Female</td>
<td>90 (29.6)</td>
<td>81 (26.6)</td>
<td>88 (28.9)</td>
<td>259 (85.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102 (33.6)</td>
<td>93 (30.6)</td>
<td>109 (35.9)</td>
<td>304 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Year of Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. First</td>
<td>25 (8.2)</td>
<td>22 (7.2)</td>
<td>26 (8.6)</td>
<td>73 (24.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Second</td>
<td>39 (12.8)</td>
<td>24 (7.9)</td>
<td>40 (13.2)</td>
<td>103 (33.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Third</td>
<td>22 (7.2)</td>
<td>47 (15.5)</td>
<td>33 (10.9)</td>
<td>102 (33.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Fourth</td>
<td>16 (5.3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10 (3.3)</td>
<td>26 (8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102 (33.6)</td>
<td>93 (30.6)</td>
<td>109 (35.9)</td>
<td>304 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Figures in brackets are in percentage*

Most of the respondents were from the second and third year of study totalling to 67.5%. There were no fourth-year students in UiTM since it is a three-year programme. None of the participants in the study are native speakers of the language and yet they are expected to achieve a good level of proficiency in the language at the end of their study. Hence, it is interesting to determine to what extent factors such as their attitude towards the language, level of language anxiety and also instrumental motivation affect their desire to learn English.

### Procedures

The English major students were briefed about the research by authors in their respective universities. The survey questionnaires were distributed to the selected samples. In their respective class, the students were able to complete the survey in about fifteen (15) minutes. As this was voluntary, no additional marks to their assessments were given to the students as incentives.

### Instruments

The survey questionnaire was designed in Google Form. It is divided into two sections namely the respondent’s profile section, where items such as gender and year of study were asked. This is then followed by the second section where all three variables Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety, Instrumental Motivation and Desire to Learn were included.

### Results

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics of the variables.

### Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>IIUM (Mean, SD)</th>
<th>UiTM (Mean, SD)</th>
<th>NU (Mean, SD)</th>
<th>Overall (Mean, SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Foreign Language Anxiety (SF)</td>
<td>3.413</td>
<td>.784</td>
<td>3.509</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the variables scored below the neutral value of three. The Attitude towards Foreign Language variable under IIUM has the highest mean value of 4.629, while the lowest mean score is 3.092 under Foreign Language Anxiety under NU.

**Measurement Model**

Both the measurement and structural models followed evaluation steps as suggested by Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt (2017). Both analyses used a bootstrapping method of 5,000 resampling as recommended. To ensure reliability and validity of the constructs in the measurement model, first, the indicator loadings and their significance must be assessed. The standardised loadings should have a value of at least 0.708 and an associated t-statistic above ±1.96 to be significant for a two-tailed test at the 5% level (Hair, Howard & Nitzl, 2020). Loadings ranging between 0.400 and 0.700 “should only be considered for removal from the scale if deleting this indicator leads to an increase in composite reliability above the suggested threshold value” (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011, p. 145). The t-statistics are obtained through bootstrapping procedure.

It is recommended that Cronbach’s Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) be reported. The scores for CA should be 0.708 or more, however 0.600 is considered as moderate or reasonable (Taber, 2018). This is followed with the examination of internal consistency, where the CR should be greater than 0.700, but lesser than 0.950 (Hair et al., 2020).

The convergent validity was then examined through AVE analysis with values obtained must be more than 0.500 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This analysis calculates the degree of individual indicators in reflecting the construct converging while comparing with other indicators of another construct(s). In Table 3, all AVE values obtained more than 0.500 as recommended (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In Table 3, the AVE scores of each construct were found to be higher than the construct’s highest squared correlation with any other constructs, fulfilling the discriminant validity requirement (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Based on these results, we can conclude that the model is sufficiently reliable and consistent. Table 3 shows the loadings, CA, CR, and AVE of all constructs. Refer to Figure 1 below for the measurement model and algorithm results.

Table 3. Items loadings, p-values, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>P-Values</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>CA (CR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward Foreign Language (SAF)</td>
<td>SAF4</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>0.764 (0.850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAF6</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>0.764 (0.850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAF8</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>0.764 (0.850)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SD is Standard Deviation
Table 1: Results of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire to Learn (SD)</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>SAF9</th>
<th>SD1</th>
<th>SD5</th>
<th>SD8</th>
<th>SD9</th>
<th>SF13</th>
<th>SF14</th>
<th>SF16</th>
<th>SF4</th>
<th>SF8</th>
<th>SI1</th>
<th>SI2</th>
<th>SI5</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could speak many foreign languages perfectly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>0.698</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>0.761</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a strong desire to know all aspects of English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.716</td>
<td>0.717</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to learn English so well that it will become natural to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to learn as much English as possible.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be honest, I really have no desire to learn English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language Anxiety (SF)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.558</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td>0.801</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get nervous when I am speaking in my English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.716</td>
<td>0.717</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel anxious if someone asks me something in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would feel calm and sure of myself if I had to order a meal in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident when asked to speak in my English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am calm whenever I have to speak in my English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.001

Figure 1. Algorithm result
Recent studies have recommended that the discriminant validity be additionally tested using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Similar to AVE, the HTMT method is a relatively new technique used to evaluate the distinctiveness of constructs with cut-off values of 0.850 or 0.900 (Hair et al., 2020). Table 4 shows the results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (1981) and the HTMT ratio.

Table 4. Discriminant validity based on Fornell and Larcker Criterion (1981) and Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Attitude toward Foreign Language (SAF)</th>
<th>Desire to Learn (SD)</th>
<th>Foreign Language Anxiety (SF)</th>
<th>Instrumental Motivation (SI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAF</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.672 (0.877)</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>0.320 (0.380)</td>
<td>0.329 (0.393)</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>0.567 (0.730)</td>
<td>0.640 (0.823)</td>
<td>0.236 (0.270)</td>
<td>0.832</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: SAF = Attitude toward Foreign Language, SF = Foreign Language Anxiety, SI = Instrumental Motivation, SD = Desire to Learn. The square roots of AVEs are shown on the diagonal in bold. The HTMT ratios are in the brackets.

The results in Table 4 indicates that each of the two groups’ models possess acceptable discriminant validity.

**Assessment of Structural Model**

Following the guideline proposed by Hair et al., (2017), the assessment of the structural model comprises six-step procedure as follows:

**Step 1: Assessing the Structural Model for Collinearity**

Table 5 demonstrates the outcome of the lateral collinearity test.

Table 5. Collinearity Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Desire to Learn (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward Foreign Language (SAF)</td>
<td>1.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language Anxiety (SF)</td>
<td>1.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Motivation (SI)</td>
<td>1.483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The variance inflation factor (VIF) score for each individual construct is lower than the offending value of 3.3 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006), indicating that collinearity is not an issue in the model.

**Step 2: Assessing the Path Coefficients**

Table 6 presents the results of path co-efficient assessment for each hypothesized relationship.

Table 6. Structural model hypothesis testing
### Hypotheses and Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis (H)</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Standardized path coefficients</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>T-Statistics</th>
<th>P-Values</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Attitude toward Foreign Language (SAF) -&gt; Desire to Learn (SD)</td>
<td>0.430</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>7.570</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Foreign Language Anxiety (SF) -&gt; Desire to Learn (SD)</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>2.832</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>Instrumental Motivation (SI) -&gt; Desire to Learn (SD)</td>
<td>0.374</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>6.777</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All hypothesized relationships are significant at 99% and 95% confidence interval (p value < 0.01 and < 0.05) with t-value ranging from 2.832 to 7.570, indicating that the postulated hypotheses of the relationships between the constructs are all supported. Refer to Figure 2 below for the bootstrapping results.

![Bootstrap result](image)

**Figure 2. Bootstrap result (Complete)**

**Step 3: Assessing the Variance Explained in the Model (R^2)**

Table 7 presents the variance explained (R^2) for the endogenous constructs of Desire to Learn. The R^2 value of 0.556 shows that all the exogenous constructs; Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety and Instrumental Motivation explains 55.6% of the variance for Desire to Learn. Overall, it shows that the relationships between the constructs under investigation are slightly above the moderate level (Hair et al., 2017).

**Step 4: Assessing the Effect Size (f^2)**

Based on the results in Table 7, Foreign Language Anxiety (0.016) has a small effect size (f^2) on Desire to Learn, whilst Attitude toward Foreign Language (0.264) and Instrumental
Motivation (0.207) exhibits a substantial medium effect size on Desire to Learn. The effect size ($f^2$) indicates that Foreign Language Anxiety, Attitude toward Foreign Language, and Instrumental Motivation are crucial in explaining students’ Desire to Learn.

Table 7. The Assessment of determination of coefficient ($R^2$), effect size ($f^2$) with predictive relevance ($Q^2$) and effect size ($q^2$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Latent Variable</th>
<th>$f^2$</th>
<th>$q^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$Q^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Attitude toward Foreign Language (SAF)</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Foreign Language Anxiety (SF)</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Instrumental Motivation (SI)</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Endogenous Latent Variable               |        |        | 0.556 | 0.3000|
|● Desire to Learn (SD)                    |        |        |       |       |

Note: Effect size of Impact indicator $f^2$ values: 0.35 (large), 0.15 (medium) and 0.02 (small). Predictive relevance of predictor exogenous latent variables $q^2$: 0.35 (large), 0.15 (medium) and 0.02 (small) (Hair et al., 2017).

Step 5: Assessing the Predictive Relevance ($Q^2$)

To measure the predictive relevance, blindfolding method is used. Table 7 shows the predictive relevance ($Q^2$) value of 0.300 for Desire to Learn. A $Q^2$ value above zero indicates that the path model has predictive relevance for the selected reflective endogenous variable. The results in Table 8 also indicate that Attitude toward Foreign Language (0.090), Foreign Language Anxiety (0.006) and Instrumental Motivation (0.071) have small predictive relevance on Desire to Learn.

Step 6: Assessing the Effect Size ($q^2$)

Based on the results in Table 7, Foreign Language Anxiety (0.006) has very small effect size ($q^2$) on Desire to Learn. Likewise, Attitude toward Foreign Language (0.090) and Instrumental Motivation (0.071) exhibit a small effect size on Desire to Learn. The results indicate that these constructs are still important in explaining students’ Desire to Learn despite small effects.

Partial Least Squares – Multi Group Analysis (PLS-MGA)

The second part of this study examined the differences in relationships between the constructs; Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety, Instrumental Motivation and Desire to Learn English language among students of three universities. As the data capturing different universities is categorical, a multigroup analysis PLS-MGA is used for moderation analysis. The parametric test is a parametric significance test for the difference of group-specific PLS-SEM results that assumes equal variances across groups. Additionally, the Welch-Satterthwait Test is a parametric significant test for the difference of group-specific PLS-SEM results that assume unequal variances across groups. Table 8a, 8b and 8c demonstrate the structural path coefficients ($\beta$) and significance differences ($p$) between the groups. Table 8a. PLS-MGA Moderation Analysis (IIUM – UiTM)
The results in Table 8a demonstrate that there is a significant difference only in the relationship between Instrumental Motivation and Desire to Learn among students of IIUM and UiTM (p >.95). It is demonstrated that the relationship is stronger in IIUM than UiTM as indicated by respective β values.

Table 8b. PLS-MGA Moderation Analysis (IIUM – NU)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Path Coefficients</th>
<th>Confidence Interval (2.5%)</th>
<th>Confidence Interval (95%)</th>
<th>PCD</th>
<th>P-Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IIUM</td>
<td>UiTM</td>
<td>IIUM</td>
<td>UiTM</td>
<td>PLS-MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>SAF -&gt; SD</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.503</td>
<td>0.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>SF -&gt; SD</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.162</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>SI -&gt; SD</td>
<td>0.526</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td>0.659</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PCD = Path Coefficient Difference, PT = Parametric Test, WST = Welch-Satterthwait Test, SAF = Attitude toward Foreign Language, SF = Foreign Language Anxiety, SI = Instrumental Motivation

*Significant at 0.005

The results in Table 8b demonstrate that there is no significant difference in the relationship between all the three variables (Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety, Instrumental Motivation) and Desire to Learn among students of IIUM and NU.

Table 8c. PLS-MGA Moderation Analysis (UiTM – NU)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Path Coefficients</th>
<th>Confidence Interval (2.5%)</th>
<th>Confidence Interval (95%)</th>
<th>PCD</th>
<th>P-Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IIUM</td>
<td>NU</td>
<td>IIUM</td>
<td>NU</td>
<td>PLS-MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>SAF -&gt; SD</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>SF -&gt; SD</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.162</td>
<td>-0.282</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>SI -&gt; SD</td>
<td>0.526</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.276</td>
<td>0.276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PCD = Path Coefficient Difference, PT = Parametric Test, WST = Welch-Satterthwait Test, SAF = Attitude toward Foreign Language, SF = Foreign Language Anxiety, SI = Instrumental Motivation
The results in Table 8C demonstrate that there is no significant difference in the relationship between all the three variables studied (Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety, Instrumental Motivation) and Desire to Learn among students of UiTM and NU.

### Discussion

In this study, the three latent variables (Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety, and Instrumental Motivation) moderately explain the variance in Desire to Learn. The effect size indicates the overall contribution of this study. The analysis of the model shows that Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety, and Instrumental Motivation can only explain 56% of the variance in Desire to Learn. This suggests that there are other factors that explain the variance.

The model suggests that of the three variables, Attitude toward Foreign Language has the strongest effect on Desire to Learn, followed by Instrumental Motivation and Foreign Language Anxiety. The students’ readiness to use the language spoken by speakers of the host country was found to be the strongest indicator of Attitude towards Foreign Language, followed by their interest in learning many foreign languages and their wish that they could speak many foreign languages.

With this knowledge, it is vital to create an authentic learning environment (Benson, 2011). In order to do this, teachers might want to include as much elements of the target language culture in teaching as possible. ESL students who have ample opportunity to use English both inside and outside classroom, with exposure to the culture, demonstrated more engagement, a positive attitude and increased level of engagement in English classes (Dimitroff, Dimitroff & Alhashimi, 2018). This implies that if teachers can improve students’ attitude towards learning English, the students’ desire to learn the language will be enhanced. Providing every opportunity for them to utilise English inside and outside classroom will assist them in terms of reducing the use of L1 in class and decreasing anxiety while communicating in English. This will result in the students becoming more enthusiastic and more motivated in learning the language.

The study has also shown that multi-group comparisons can be made using PLS-SEM. This is made obvious when the relationship between Instrumental Motivation and Desire to Learn was analysed. The study shows that though the distance between two universities is close (in the same country), the students can be different in terms of how Instrumental Motivation affect their...
students’ desire to learn. Similarly, a long distance (involving two different countries) may not differentiate two universities that are offering the same programme where these variables are concerned.

Conclusion
This paper discusses how Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is applied to understand the relationships between Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety and Instrumental Motivation, and Desire to Learn. It illustrates how the characteristics of PLS-SEM can make it a useful tool in language research. In the study involving ESL undergraduates of three universities from Malaysia and Thailand, Attitude toward Foreign Language, Foreign Language Anxiety and Instrumental Motivation were found moderately affecting the variance in Desire to Learn. It is thus implied that positive attitude towards the language, reduced language anxiety and heightened instrumental motivation can help improve one’s desire in learning a language. As this study indicates the three factors explain 56% of the variance, it is interesting to investigate other factors that could have cause-effect relationship with students’ desire to learn.

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References


The Difficulties that Tertiary English Students Confront when Translating Relative Pronouns

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Abstract
The study aims to alleviate the relative pronoun difficulties that Saudi students encounter whenever translating. The study's significance is that it uncovers relative pronouns among Saudi Arabian college freshmen. The study seeks to address the question: what difficulties do Saudi students confront when translating relative pronouns? The researcher employed a descriptive analytical approach. The sampling unit of twenty-five undergraduate students, preferred from the boys' section, were males in the first stage, attending university in the second semester of 2020 at the College of Arts and Sciences, getting a degree in English in Beljurshi, Al Baha University, and this study used a validated assessment of written Arabic sentences as a technique to gather a description of the research problem. The analysis was undertaken, and the issues that Saudi students had with relative pronouns were located and labeled as whose, who, whom, where, and where in the study. According to the study's findings, “whom” obtained a high score and “which” received a low score. According to the discussion, the difficulties that students have are caused by a lack of the student's failure to distinguish between subject and object pronouns, inaccuracy could be attributed to a lack of differentiation between relative pronouns, and the student's inability to discern between relative value pronouns. The study suggests further research into other areas related to relative pronouns.

Keywords: Confront, differences, difficulties, relative pronouns, students, translation

Introduction

According to a thorough review of the literature on the subject, very few research studies have been conducted on the difficulty encountered by Arab students in translating relative pronouns from Arabic into English. More specific, the researcher discovered only four studies that have some methodological bearing on the current study.

For most skilled translators, translation is a very complex activity and a difficult procedure. There is still a lack of attention paid to the blunders made by university students when translating relative clauses. According to the researchers, Saudi undergraduate students are reported to have difficulties with relative pronouns in translation during translation lessons, which could be expressed differently.

This research is notable because it is way ahead of its time, being one of the few that has looked into relative clauses within Saudi Arabian college freshmen. As a result, this may be useful to students, professors, translators, and course designers.

The current study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by investigating related pronouns for a group of Saudi participants and providing the causes and solutions to this problem. As a result, the present research transposed relative pronouns. The current study must meet the following research objectives: Identification of the kind of relative clause that Saudi students experience whenever translating. They were English majors in their second year, registered in the fall term of 2021. The program, which is offered by the College of Science and Arts in Baljurashi, Al Baha, focuses on the related pronoun difficulties that Saudi students face when translating. The study sought to answer study questions.

1-What are the difficulties with relative pronouns that Saudi students face when translating?
2-What are the causes of the relative pronouns difficulties in the translation?

This scope is confined to describing the relative pronoun challenges that undergrads experience in translation, as outlined in the research problem; it is therefore, narrow to the students who make up a batch and the Arabic sentences that some of these understudies translate; they seemed to be the first English majors enlisted in the fall term of 2021. The course is administered by Al-Baha University. This study will be conducted between 2021 and 2022.

Literature Review

Translation and Language

According to Maalouf (1996), translation entails "explanation and clarification." It is claimed to translate speech with its meaning and clarity, as well as translate speech, which is to interpret or cross it in another language. It is the art of transferring speech or writing from the original language to the desired language. It requires linguistic taste and a method that the translator employs in their work. Translation has always played a part in spreading peoples' civilizations and cultures as well as understandings between nations and individuals, and it is credited with propelling nations up the rungs of civilized peace. In recent years, translation has grown in importance, as has the pressing need for it in our modern age, and it remains one of the necessities of contemporary intellectual life because it is difficult for a nation to live in isolation from other nations, particularly in this age and age.
As a result, Ibrahim (2019) quotes, "Translation is an important science in our current era. We can communicate with the rest of the world and those around us through translating. (p.7). The importance of translation is increasing by the day, especially in the world of technology. According to Didaoui (1992), idioms and expressions necessitate the translator's ability to accurately deliver the message intended by the writer or author to the reader. The translator acts as a linguistic intermediary, converting what is stated or written. A person cannot become a translator unless he meets certain qualifications, which include knowledge, regulations, and techniques of use, as well as considerable training and experience.

**Methods of general Arabic-to-English translation**

According to Didaoui (1992), the technical procedures used to communicate the meaning of speech are known as “translation methods”. The translation was done using two well-known approaches that the ancient Arabs used in their translations of Greek and other books: the first method is to look at a single word as both the literal meaning and what it means. The indication of that meaning is fixed and passed to another till he reaches the sentence he wishes to translate. This is known as a literal translation. In the second method, the translator creates the statement, so he remembers its meaning and expresses it in the other language with a sentence that fits it, whether the words are equal or not. This technique is known as free translation.

According to Mansour (2002), the text is a collection of sentences, and the sentences are a collection of words. And the Arabic words we find in some of them have a variety of meanings when placed in the context of various phrases or sentences. A single word can have multiple plural forms, or even a plural form. Because the expression has different connotations in each language, it is not acceptable for him to provide a literal translation in this circumstance; instead, he must come up with something that is appropriate or equivalent to it in the Arabic expressions. It is tricky to render the sentences and proverbs into literal translations, so he must try the matching elements or approach him from the sentence, unless this is not possible, in which case he may resort to interpretive or moral translation.

**Problems and their types**

According to Mustafa (1989), linguistic problems exist due to the paucity of data, but they happen in the first or mother language, and these problems are supposed to be the result of confusion in the elements of both languages. That these issues arise as an effect of rules from two languages that do not exist is clear.

As a result, Kamal (2000) quotes, “Working with words, phrases, and sentences is a problem. The problems arising from the difference in grammar between international languages put the translator at risk if he is unable to properly transmit the structures.” (p.47). Because every language must belong to a specific culture, the translator may be capable of translating the term into another language, but he cannot be around to transmit the culture of the word.

Sini (1982) claims that difficulties with language and ineffective rule application. Such as improper generalization of the rule and a lack of understanding of the laws’ settings, are to blame. There are issues when a learner tries to make language assumptions based on his or her limited experience in the classroom or from a textbook. There are structural issues that impede
communication and affect the general organization of the phrase when the incorrect word order is added, such as conjunctions of deleted sentences and incorrect or misplaced sentences. Additional issues affect one of the sentence's constituents, frequently inhibiting proper communication, such as issues with the incorrect conjugation of the noun and verb.

According to Ahmed (1989), there are issues linked to overlapping of the rules of the first language with the rules of the second language, such that the student cannot express his thoughts accurately verbally, or in writing. The difficulties occur since childhood when using the target language, making them difficult to overcome because the student may become accustomed to these difficulties over time. There are issues with learning the target language that begins in childhood.

Abdullah (2014) Languages differ in terms of the system in which sentences are arranged, the order of their words, and the relationship of each word to the other; the verb has a special place in the sentence for the subject, and thus the object has a special location. The transition from finding a term in one language identical to another term in the other language is the fundamental issue of the translation process between the two languages. These problems may arise within the language's foundation and indicate the learner's attempt to make language assumptions based on their limited experience.

**Relative nouns**

According to Al-Azhari (2006), a relative noun is one that lacks a relative conjunction with a phrase, whether nominative or actual, or a semi-sentence "adverb or accusative" or return, and whose connotation is incomplete, and after that, there's a statement. It is a knowledge noun that implies a specific use in linking speech, and in a clearer meaning, it is used to link nouns and verbs with a sentence that is mentioned after it, in which the relative noun is indicated by a pronoun. There's also a word for "feminine singular," as well as words for the dual and plural forms of their two types.

According to Ghalayini (2005), language is concerned with a large number of linguistic concepts and the large number of rules used in producing words and sentence structures. The link sentence is a knowledge noun whose meaning is only completed by the next sentence. Relative nouns are nouns that are used to connect discourse and denote a specific object in a phrase. Who, regularly, uses this for a normal person, masculine and feminine, multiple, dual, and single? A relative noun must always explain what it means to one of two things following it: a sentence or its resemblance, both of which are referred to as the relative pronoun. The related term denotes something specific or comparable, and it's mentioned just after it, so it's called the relative pronoun.

According to Al-Khaws (1987), a related pronoun is a noun that is attached to a specific by sentence termed the sentence of the link. Is it about a person, like Ali, or other animals and inanimate objects? The term "which" is an ambiguous name with a confusing meaning, and we have no idea what it refers to. If a sentence followed after them, the ambiguity vanished and the meaning became plain; this sentence is known as the sentence of connection, and that is why this name is not clear unless the sentence of connection is there.
According to Al-Noqrat (2003), the nominative relative consists of two elements: a unique relative noun and a common relative noun. Each relative word belongs to a different sort, whether singular, dual, plural, masculine, or feminine. Every relative noun has all of the singular, dual, plural, masculine, and feminine forms, but the intended purpose can be achieved by using a repeated pronoun that matches the sound and meaning of the term. Common relative words include who, what, that, whom, and which. A relative noun is a noun that appears in the middle of a statement and helps to clarify its meaning. The relative clause refers to the sentence that comes after it. If you take out the relative word from the sentence, you'll notice a considerable loss of meaning, which could lead to a serious misunderstanding.

According to Samarrai (2003, p. 189), relative nouns have their own functions in the language, making it easier for speakers to deal with them without difficulty. It is the most significant tool in the classical language since it aids in the adjustment of the right sentences and their communication with one another, and the connected noun must constantly define its meaning and understand what it means. It is followed by one of two things: a semi-sentence or a statement, both of which are referred to as the relative pronoun. This relationship, by definition, helps the noun stay connected, and it is called a verbal presupposition because the relative term fails to describe what this connection entails. Relative nouns are defined as a type of tool that connects sentences and, in another way, connects the noun with the completed verb, and these nouns come in a variety of forms, ranging from the masculine and feminine singulars, such as one and that, to the masculine and feminine dual, and so on. The relative noun sentence refers to the sentences that follow the relative noun.

Previous Related Studies

Some academics have looked into translation issues and a variety of current and previous research on student translation issues. Abdullah (1999) investigated the Errors Made by English as a foreign language (EFL) Learners when Using English Relative Pronouns. Learning is a challenging task made more difficult by a number of factors, the most prominent of which are the rules for converting other languages into a young person's native tongue and the contrasts between it and their mother tongue. For Syrians, licking can produce a lot of weariness, leading to many mistakes. The study employed a descriptive technique to analyze when they use related pronouns, utilizing a questionnaire and diagnostic exam as data collection methods, and a squad of twenty students was chosen (students and 100 students). Students were seated at the city's two secondary schools for boys. The survey found numerous things, the most notable of which is that the a substantial percentage of high school pupils (almost 70%) comprehend the functions and uses of related pronouns and so fall into this category. According to the viewpoint of most teachers who completed their questionnaire (75 percent of the errors are related to a paucity of understanding), there are various errors made while using these pronouns. The study recommends that an English teacher draw students' attention to use relative pronouns correctly, and the authors of the curricula recommend that the curricula be provided with adequate training.

Al-Najjar (2012) The intent of this research was to scrutinize relative clause errors in English-Arabic directional translations completed by Al-Azhar University of Gaza second and third-year English department students. The researcher employed a descriptive academic approach to answer the study's questions. A diagnostic test that includes English and Arabic relative clauses consists
of 56 sentences divided into five groups. The test was administered at random to 110 students, or 35.94 percent of the total population, drawn at random from the study's sample.

Abood (2015) looked into the Usage of Related Pronouns. The survey found numerous things, the most notable of which is that the vast majority of high school pupils (almost 70%) comprehend the functions and uses of related pronouns and so fall into this category. However, most teachers who completed their questionnaire, which is the same as the grammar of the second language, made various errors while using these pronouns. This work undertakes a corpus-based examination. This research also attempts to evaluate and analyze a number of theories relating to the grammar, linguistics, and pragmatic behavior of relative pronouns that have previously been discussed in the English and Arabic languages. Second, it addresses relative clause grammar and the relationship between relative pronouns and their antecedents. It encoded relative pronoun linguistics and advocated unitary procedural linguistics. It also claims that relative pronouns encode procedural instructions for the listener.

Mohsen (2016) investigated The Acquisition of the English Relative Pronoun. The researcher sees how Arab students use the relative pronoun "who" in English by translating words from their native language (Arabic) into English (English). The individuals were given the responsibility of translating Arabic to English relative statements. According to the findings, students struggled with a variety of issues when using the relative pronoun “who”.

Thyab (2022) Learning English relative clauses, like learning any other language, is difficult for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, many English-language academics find it challenging to acquire relative clauses. Learners of English relative clauses who are native Arabic speakers will notice similarities and differences in rule construction. These parallels and variances could be a significant source of positive and negative transmission. In contrast, investigations and error analysis, which are also known as "such restricted findings," are supported and highlighted in this work. Negative transfer causes challenges for Arabic-mother tongue English learners when using relative clauses. The related clause creation rules in Arabic are identical to those in English. Investigations and error analysis, which are also known as "such restricted findings," are supported and highlighted in this work. Negative transfer causes challenges for Arabic mother tongue English learners when using relative clauses. The related clause creation rules in Arabic are identical to those in English.

Some Saudi academics have studied relative pronouns in general, but there has been little research on relative pronouns among Saudi students, hence this study was undertaken to fill in the gaps.

Methods
Twenty-five Arab EFL students from Al-Baha University were involved in this study. All of the participants were male students. Students at this level attended a translation course in their first year of university. To analyze relative pronoun difficulties in translation, the researchers used a descriptive method. It collaborated on syntactic problems. The information was gathered using written materials in Arabic.
Participants
A sample is English-speaking students currently in a language education program. The participants were administered a sentence translation test to see how well they could translate and recognize relative pronouns. The group consisted of a total of 25 academics. They were English students in their first year, recruited in the academic session of 2020. Several of the individuals had completed translation courses and the other way around, so they were all educated and got a similar education.

Research Instruments
An Arabic sentence was one of the study's tools. A group of professionals rated these sentences after examining a set of texts and offering their critique. As a result, these sentences were chosen. The students were told to translate Arabic sentences into English. The study's sample was subjected to a translation test. Relative pronoun difficulties were found and rated when 20 subjects translated a passage into Arabic.

Research Procedures
The study's data was gathered using a test, and the Arabic sentences were obtained from various sources. This information was examined by a group of professionals who offered their opinions, made revisions, and clarified some issues. As a result, these sentences were chosen.

Data Analysis
The act of documenting and determining the challenges experienced by research participants is the participants come up with difficulties. However, the investigation was limited to relative pronoun concerns. SPSS was used to probe the prevalence of relative pronouns and to respond to the study objectives. After acquiring the necessary data for the study, syntactic issues in translation were identified, classified, and listed below.

Findings
Relative Pronouns: Difficulties
The analysis indicated that the greatest problems were in the “whom” translation domain, where the number of errors was 36, or 13%, and then the difficulties arose in the “whose” domain, where the number of errors was 29 and 25%, and the errors in the “who” domain was around 21 and 18%. The number of errors was the same in which and where domains, where the percentages of errors were 15 and 13%, respectively. The overall number of errors was 116, which was distributed across all elements.

The following sentences describe relative pronouns.

Whose
It connects words, defines a name, or provides information about it, and is well-known for to signify ownership. It alludes to the individual or people involved in the discourse. When discussing possession, we employ the relative word “whose”.

We noted that some students did not produce the relative pronoun appropriately and substituted another relative pronoun in its place, while others removed the related pronoun and did not replace
it with another related pronoun, resulting in flaws in the phrase and a lack of grasp of the intended meaning.

احتر قارئ الذي توقفت سيارته
I told the man whose car had stopped

Some students have used which rather than whose. I told the man which car had stopped. This is an incorrect translation because “whose” is regarded as a relative clause if it connects two sentences and does not appear before the phrase like an interrogative but instead appears after the thing possessed with the meaning, which is a method for connecting two sentences with the same subject as the word they refer to, and that relates to things or animals rather than possession. Another blunder occurred in the translation. The participants used “who” instead of “whose”. I told the man who car had stopped. In addition, the students used the phrase “that” instead of “whose.” I told the man that car had stopped. This sentence contains

هذا هو الازج الذي كسرت يده
This is the carpenter whose hand broke.

Some students left off the word "whose" in the phrase. This is the carpenter broke his hand. The students may have overlooked this word due to insufficient usage of “whose.” As a result, they resorted to eliminating this word, believing that the statement would be complete if they did so. The pupils also substituted the word “who” for the term “whose”. This is the carpenter broke his hand. This error could be triggered by a similarity between the two words.

Who

We use who to express people instead of the subject name or subject pronoun, such as: I, we, you, he, or we can remove these pronouns from the sentence after using the relative pronoun instead.

الطلب الذي كان برفقي
The student who was with me came

When translating, we see that the students omitted the term “who,” The student was with me came and did not supply a replacement, which ruined the statement's sense. The students made no attempt to translate this sentence, instead merely removing the relative word "who." from the Arabic text. This error could be the result of a misunderstanding of the language's rules, as well as the distinction between each relative pronoun and how to use it.

ذلك هو الطفل الذي سقط على الأرض
That's the child who fell to the ground.

Some pupils mistranslated this statement, adding the terms “that” and “whom.” As an example, as evidenced by the students, rendering of this statement. That's the child that fell to the ground. It is well known that “who” is a related pronoun that expresses the subject's case and acts on behalf of the subject. As a result, they cannot be employed in this situation. Despite the presence of the subject and the absence of the object, that’s the child whom fell to the ground. Students utilize
“whom” instead of “who”. The cause of these errors could be a misinterpretation of the correct structure of the English language.

Where
It is a tool for connecting sentences and identifying a word or its meaning and indicating a location. The issues in the application of "where" were few compared to the previous errors, as the students' translation in this sentence was

ذهبت الى حيث يعيش صديقي
I went to where my friend lives.

The participants did not find this component difficult. However, when translating into another language, some students deleted the word "where." I went to my friend lives.

هذا هو السوق حيث اشتري اغراضي
This is the market where I buy my things.

Furthermore, there were few errors in this sentence; just a few students added the word "which" to the sentence when translating it to the other language. This is the market which I buy my things. The students demonstrated a considerable standard of competence in in translating this domain, indicating that they can discriminate it from other domains and understand when to use it.

Whom
Whom is accustomed to describe people and is used instead of the object noun or object pronoun.

Errors in relative pronouns like “whom” were the most common when compared to other related pronouns.

ذلك الطفل الذي أنقذته
That is the kid whom I saved.

There are numerous errors in this statement, including the application of the relative pronoun “who” instead of “whom”. That is the kid who I saved. The relative pronoun "who" is a term that can only be used when the subject is mentioned. That is, it serves as a subject. While the relative pronoun "whom" is an object rather than a subject, the students were unable to discriminate between the two words. Some students deleted the word “whom.” That is the kid I saved. In addition, the students used the phrase “that” instead of “whom.” That is the kid that I saved.

هذا هو الشاب الذي رأيته با لذيروحة
This is a guy whom I saw yesterday.

The students substituted “that” for the relative pronoun “whom.” This is a guy that I saw yesterday. Some students left off the word "whom" in the phrase. This is a man I saw yesterday. Some pupils mistranslated this statement, adding the terms “which” This is a guy which I saw yesterday. One of the factors that contribute to students' incorrect rendering into generalization and ignorance of the rules is a lack of presentation of English grammar and grammatical activities.
The difficulties that students have are caused by a lack of the student's failure to distinguish between subjects and object pronouns.

**Which**

We use “which” instead of the participle that refers to a location or the pronoun it to refer to things or animals. When utilizing the relative pronoun, we can also use that instead of the subject or pronoun.

نب الذي اشتريته

This is a rabbit which I bought.

Some students added the word “that” instead of “which”. *This is rabbit I got.* This could be owing to the similarities between the use of "which" and “that,” as well as students' lack of understanding of the distinction between them and how to utilize them.

الكلب الذي قتلناه

The dog which we killed was very dangerous.

The pupils had little trouble interpreting this phrase, and most of their versions were correct.

**Where**

هذا هو السوق الذي أشتري منه أغراضي

This is the market where I buy my things.

Similarly, the errors in this sentence were the same as in the previous sentence: *this is the market that I buy my things.* That was to be used instead of "where."

ذهب إلى حيث يعيش صديقي

I went to where my friend lives.

The pupils had little trouble interpreting this phrase, and all of their versions were correct.

Following this thorough debate, we conclude that the difficulties that students have are caused by a lack of the student's failure to distinguish between subject and object pronouns and the student's failure to distinguish between relative pronouns.

**Discussions**

1-What are the difficulties with relative pronouns that Saudi students face when translating?
2-What are the causes of the relative pronouns difficulties in the translation?

**Relative pronouns Difficulties**

1-The students made 116 errors in all domains.
2-The greatest problems were in the “whom” translation domain, where the number of errors was 36, or 13%.
3-The difficulties that students have are caused by a lack of the student's failure to distinguish between subjects and object pronouns.
4-Inaccuracy linked to a scarcity of differentiation between relative pronouns.
5-There is inability to differentiate between relative and absolute pronouns.
Conclusion
The study sought to examine the difficulties in related pronouns and relative pronouns, which were categorized as follows: who, whose, whom, where, and which. According to the analysis, the “whom” domain had the most problems, while the “which” domain and the “where” domain had the fewest translation errors. The results suggested that students' difficulties are caused by a lack of difference between subjects and object pronouns, with inaccuracy owing to a deficit in differentiation between relative pronouns. Students have difficulty distinguishing between relative pronouns and one of the issues students have is a lack of understanding of the consequences of relative clauses.

About the Author:
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**Appendices**

**Arabic Translation**

أخبرت الرجل الذي توقفت سيارته
هذا الرجل الذي قطع يده
هذا الطفل الذي سقط
لا لذ كهو الطفل الذي أنقذته
جاء التلميذ الذي كان برفقتي
هذا الشاب الذي التقيته
هذا الكلب الذي قتلناه كان في غاية الخطورة
ذهبت إلى حيث يعيش صديقي
هذا هو السوق الذي اشتريت فيه

**English Translation**

I told the man whose car had stopped.
This is the carpenter whose hand broke.
That's the child who fell to the ground.
The student who was with me came.
This is the child whom I met yesterday.
This is the guy whom I met yesterday.
This is a rabbit which I bought.
The dog which we killed was very dangerous.
I went to where my friend lives.
This is the market where I buy my things.

**Relative Pronouns: Difficulties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>who</th>
<th>whom</th>
<th>Whose</th>
<th>where</th>
<th>which</th>
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The Difficulties that Tertiary English Students Confront when Translating

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</table>

% 18 31 25 13 13
Gender Differences in Written Communication Anxiety among Libyan Postgraduates in Malaysia

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Abstract:
Writing represents an essential language skill. However, anxiety is often an obstacle to students’ positive writing outcomes. In Libya, students face detrimental challenges in English writing due to factors such as a high level of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) which affects their written communication performance. This study, therefore, aims to examine gender differences in the level of written communication anxiety amongst Libyan postgraduates studying in Malaysian universities. The study employed a descriptive survey in which a self-administered questionnaire was used as a data-collection tool. The analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and the Chi-square test. The findings revealed that most Libyan postgraduates in Malaysia experience a moderate level of writing anxiety, whereas none of them experience a low anxiety level. Additionally, no significant differences exist between male and female students regarding the level of written communication anxiety. It is hoped that this study could provide useful information that can be used by instructors to help students overcome writing anxiety and achieve positive learning outcomes. Nevertheless, this analysis is limited to gender differences in the level of written communication anxiety across gender and does not consider the types of anxiety experienced by Libyan postgraduates, which can be an important step for further investigation.

Keywords: Communication, foreign language anxiety, gender differences, Libyan postgraduate students, Malaysian universities, writing skills

Introduction
Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) represents a significant obstacle to successful learning outcomes for many learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In particular, writing is considered one of the most critical language skills (Casanave, 2003; Hassan, Abdul Rahman, & Azmi, 2021; Jahin, 2012; Almatanah, Ab Rashid, & Yunus, 2018). However, anxiety is often an obstacle to students’ positive writing outcomes (Al-Ahmad, 2003; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). According to Daly and Wilson (1983), anxiety refers to a feeling of fear or apprehension about something that may occur. In this regard, composing a piece of writing and having it evaluated by an instructor or colleagues is often a matter of worry among students. At times, “nervousness, frustration, self-doubt, and fears are associated with a person’s tendencies to approach or avoid situations” (p. 327). As a result, students’ self-efficacy might become low, which causes poor performance (Erkan & Saban, 2011).

Moreover, Wang (2021) reported that anxiety could significantly predict EFL students’ creative writing performance, signifying that students who feel less anxious tend to perform better in written communication than those with a high level of anxiety. Therefore, as mentioned by Huerta, Goodson, Beigi, and Chlup (2017), “researchers interested in psychological factors affecting writers in higher education institutions, or academic writers, are concerned with internal variables affecting writing productivity” (p. 716), such as anxiety. Additionally, writing anxiety causes feelings of worry accompanied by reactions such as excessive sweating, heart beating, and negative expectations, as well as bad-adaptive behaviors of a learner's experience while performing a specific writing task at a given time and place (Erkan & Saban, 2011).

In Libya, English is regarded as a foreign language and becomes increasingly an important language for the citizens. Nevertheless, research shows that Libyan students face various English writing challenges due to factors such as a high level of FLA which affects their written communication performance (Elkali, 2018). Historically, English language education suffered from the government’s nonchalant attitude, particularly between 1969 and 1996 (Maghur, 2010; Mohammed, 2005). Thus, most Libyan university students do not attain English proficiency even after graduation (Gadour, 2018). According to Gadour, this problem occurs perhaps, due to a lack of practice or dealing with the English language outside the classroom. Given this situation, research into how Libyan students can improve their English proficiency becomes crucial.

Recent previous studies have stressed the importance of gender in determining the level of FLA (Geçkin, 2020; Liu, 2021; Siahpoosh, Varghaei, & Khodaddadi, 2022). According to Siahpoosh et al. (2022), the possible differences between males and females have been considered a crucial factor that could influence the level of communication anxiety among EFL students. Thus, examining gender differences in FLA can help students to overcome writing anxiety and achieve positive learning outcomes. However, studies that examined FLA among Libyan students focused on speaking apprehension (Aldarasi, 2020; Toubot & Seng, 2018) and have not considered gender as a variable. In essence, research into gender differences in Libyan students’ FLA, particularly written communication, is either lacking or inadequate. Therefore, using a descriptive approach, this study investigates gender differences in the level of written communication anxiety amongst Libyan postgraduates studying in Malaysian universities. Specifically, this study aims to achieve the following objectives.
1. What are the levels of written communication anxiety among male and female Libyan postgraduates in Malaysian universities?

2. To what extent do the levels of written communication anxiety differ among the students in terms of gender?

**Literature Review**

The number of Arab postgraduate students in Malaysian universities has increased (Al-Zubaidi & Rechards, 2010; Najeeb, Maros, & Mohd Nor, 2012), perhaps due to several reasons, such as global educational recognition, affordability of tuition fees, reasonable cost of living as well as political and economic stability and safety (Najeeb et al., 2012). These students are typically expected “to submit dissertations in English” (Al-Zubaidi & Rechards, 2010, p. 107). However, while written communication plays a significant role in high education, Arab students face difficulties in using the English language due to several reasons, including the inference of their native language. According to Abdulkareem (2013), Arab postgraduate students “are incapable of using their own words or reformat sentences based on their own critical thinking and reorganize sentences to be more effective academically (p. 1553). Also, most of the students feel that the English language programs designed to prepare them for academic writing were inadequate.

A number of studies have investigated the use of English among Arab postgraduate students in Malaysian universities generally (eg. Al-Zubaidi & Rechards, 2010; Najeeb et al., 2012; Sarwari & Wahab, 2018). For instance, Al-Zubaidi and Rechards (2010) investigated the cultural and language barriers faced by Arab postgraduate students in five selected Malaysian universities. According to the study, a significant number of Arab postgraduate students “were concerned about language barriers” (p. 126). Similarly, the study conducted by Najeeb et al. (2012) focused on politeness strategies employed by Arab postgraduates in their email writing. The study found that most Arab postgraduates who study in Malaysia face challenges in English written communication due to their poor English proficiency and lack of awareness about local cultural norms. Also, Abdulkareem (2013) used questionnaires and written tests to investigate speaking and academic writing errors committed by Arab postgraduates at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). The study examined students from different Arab countries, including Algeria, Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The findings revealed that Arab postgraduates who study at UTM face academic writing problems in terms of “sentence structure, vocabulary, and expressing ideas” (p. 1556).

Additionally, a study conducted by Sarwari and Wahab (2018) focused on the correlation between English Language Proficiency (ELP) and Intercultural Communication Competence (ICCC) amongst Arab students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels at a Malaysian public university. The findings revealed a significant correlation between the attributes of ELP and ICCC. This correlation means that the level of Arab students’ ELP determines their involvement in daily interaction with their fellow students who speak different languages, which tends to help them improve their ELP. A more recent study shows that “Arab students mostly preferred the use of YouTube, Facebook, and Skype for learning the English language” (Jarrah & Alzubi, 2021, p. 683), which can help them improve their communication competence.
Gender Differences in Foreign Language Anxiety

Anxiety in foreign language communication may pose several challenges to language learners as well as undermine their self-efficacy and personality, and as a result, affect learners’ ability to communicate effectively (Li, 2007). Also, anxiety affects students’ cognitive capability in situations that seem difficult to them while performing a task for specific language skills such as writing (Sabti, Mansor, Alzikriti, Abdalhussein, & Dhari, 2016). Such cognitive interference often occurs as a result of learners’ high levels of anxiety. Students’ encounter with “writing block” on tests is a good example of cognitive interference at the output stage (Cheng, 2004). According to Alsalooli and Al-Tale (2022), FLA “has become an important study area in EFL learning and teaching” (p. 145).

A growing number of studies have focused on gender differences and their correlation with written communication anxiety in the foreign language context (Alsalooli & Al-Tale, 2022; Al-Kubaisy, Hummadi, & Turki, 2019; Gerencheal, 2016; Liu, 2021; Mulyono, Liestyana, Warni, Suryoputro, & Ningsih, 2020) and reported inconsistent findings. For instance, Gerencheal (2016) investigated the differences in the anxiety level of third-year EFL learners at Mizan-Tepi University, Ethiopia. According to the findings, females tend to have a higher anxiety level in English communication than males. Recently, Mulyono et al. (2020) used a survey design to determine the perceived level of writing anxiety among EFL Indonesian students across gender. The findings revealed that most students have a moderate level of communication anxiety. However, the students’ writing anxiety is not influenced by gender.

Some studies focused on how gender affects students’ FLA. In this regard, Geçkin (2020) examined the extent to which gender differences affect the foreign language anxiety of Turkish pre-intermediate EFL students at a preparatory school in Turkey. The study proved the influence of gender in determining the level of anxiety amongst the respondents. The findings also showed that females exhibited a higher level of language anxiety as compared with males. More recently, Alsalooli and Al-Tale (2022) investigated the level and causes of FLA among 69 first-year EFL learners at Bisha University in Saudi Arabia. The study revealed that gender does not affect the EFL learners’ level of anxiety. In essence, the inconsistency of previous findings indicates the need to further investigate the relationship between gender and anxiety in the foreign language context.

Specifically, a few studies investigated written communication anxiety in the foreign language context (Al-Kubaisy et al., 2019; Elkali, 2018; Mulyono et al., 2020). For instance, Al-Kubaisy et al. (2019) reported a significant difference between males and females regarding writing anxiety with females experiencing a higher level of anxiety than males. Most previous studies examining FLA among Libyans focused on speaking apprehension at the undergraduate level (Aldarasi, 2020; Toubot & Seng, 2018). Also, these studies have not considered gender as a variable. Therefore, this study pays attention to gender differences in written communication, particularly among Libyan postgraduates studying in Malaysian universities. This is because, as mentioned by Geçkin (2020), understanding individual differences can be an important means through which instructors can help students to overcome FLA. The study can be an important step to help international students, who often face various challenges in a foreign land (Hassan, Gamji, Nasidi, & Azmi, 2021), overcome language anxiety.
Theoretical Viewpoint
The analysis is guided by the Theory of Foreign Language Apprehension (FLA) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). According to Trang, Moni, and Baldauf (2013), FLA is a widely accepted theory that has a significant impact on language anxiety research. A specific theoretical facet of this theory suggests that FLA is situation-specific anxiety that arises from the difficulty of foreign language learning rather than nervousness and may affect learners’ performance negatively (Chen & Chang, 2004; Horwitz et al., 1986; Tran, 2012). Thus, FLA is considered “a distinct form of anxiety related to foreign language acquisition” (Zheng, 2008, p. 2). Horwitz et al. (1986) defined anxiety related to a foreign language as distinct complex self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with language learning. According to Horwitz et al. (2001), these elements arise from the uniqueness of the language-learning process with a strong relation to the language-learning context. Against this assumption, the current investigation is intended to measure gender differences in written communication among Libyans in Malaysia.

Methodology
The study employs a descriptive survey to investigate gender differences in the level of written communication anxiety among Libyan postgraduates in Malaysia. A descriptive survey applies to large population samples and takes place in realistic contexts as well as enables researchers to make general inferences (Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, 2009). According to Wimmer and Diminick (2003), the survey approach allows researchers to efficiently categorize variables and can be used to measure respondents’ attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics. A detailed explanation of the methodological approach adopted in this investigation is provided in the following sections.

Sample Size and Data Collection Procedure
A sample of 384 respondents was drawn from the population of 568 Libyan postgraduates in the Kuala Lumpur area, obtained from the Libyan embassy in Malaysia. The students use English to write their thesis and dissertations in English as part of graduation requirements. The sample was determined using Cochran’s (1977) formula for sample size calculation as follows.

\[
n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \left( \frac{n_0 - 1}{N} \right)}
\]

\[
n = \frac{384}{1 + \left( \frac{384 - 1}{568} \right)} = 229.35
\]

Based on this formula, hence, 384 is the sample size, \(n_1\) = sample size of population, population size: \(N = 568\), confidence level: 95% - CI = 0.95, margin of error: 5% - \(e = 0.05\), target proportion: 50% - \(p = 0.5\). The students were selected randomly, which implies that each Libyan postgraduate in the Kuala Lumpur area has an equal chance of being selected for the study. The advantages of simple random sampling include its low cost and the ability to gather data in a short time and represent a large population (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire via a google form. The Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) questionnaire was adopted from Daly and Miller (1975) and modified to suit the purpose of this investigation. The test is a scale for standard writing that consists of 26 items dealing with students’ tendencies not to write, attitudes toward writing tasks, and their feelings as they write. To ensure
validity, the questionnaire items were checked by experts, and subsequently, changes were based on the experts’ remarks.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data, particularly the mean, standard deviations, frequency, and Chi-square test. Specifically, the mean and standard deviation were used to ascertain the students’ written communication anxiety levels. Whereas the Chi-square test was employed to determine the extent to which students’ anxiety levels differ in gender. To perform the analysis, inferences were set at an alpha of ≤ 0.05 via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24.

**Findings**

A total of 384 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, of which 250 were returned and found valid for analysis. The demographic information shows that most of the respondents (48.8%) are between the age of 31 and 40 years, whereas 29.2% of them are above 40 years of age. Also, 220% of the respondents are between the age of 25 and 30 years. Additionally, more than half of the respondents are males (52.0%), while 48.0% of them are females. Also, most of the respondents (52.8%) are Master’s degree students, whereas 47.2% are PhD students. The purpose of this study was to examine the level of anxiety and gender differences in written communication among Libyan undergraduates in Malaysian universities.

This outcome is presented in Tables 1-3 as follows.

**Table 1. Level of foreign language writing anxiety**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Anxiety</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Minimum score</th>
<th>Maximum score</th>
<th>Mean ± SD</th>
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<td>Low</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>58.83 ± 4.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>72.57 ± 5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
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**Table 2. Respondents’ gender distributions and level of anxiety**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Counts</th>
<th>Level of Anxiety</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Count</td>
<td>87a</td>
<td>43a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Gender</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the level of anxiety</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Extent of gender differences in foreign language writing anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To achieve the objectives of this study, Table 1 shows the level of foreign language writing anxiety among the respondents. Whereas, Table 2 presents the respondents’ gender distributions and levels of anxiety, while Table 3 depicts the extent of gender differences in foreign language writing anxiety among the respondents. The first objective of this study was to determine the levels of written communication anxiety among male and female Libyan postgraduates in Malaysian universities. As shown in Table 1, none of the respondents have a low written communication anxiety level. Whereas, 166 of the respondents, which amounts to 66.4% have a moderate level of anxiety, while 33.6% of them have a high anxiety level. These findings demonstrate that most Libyan postgraduates studying in Malaysia experience a moderate level of written communication anxiety.

The second objective of this study was to determine the extent to which the levels of written communication anxiety differ among Libyan postgraduates in Malaysian universities. As shown in Table 2, each subscript letter denotes a subset of the level of anxiety categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at a 0.05 level of significance. The cross-tabulation of gender and the level of anxiety, as presented in Table 2, reveals that 34.8% of male...
respondents experience a moderate level of written communication anxiety, while 17.2% of them have a high anxiety level. Conversely, 31.6% of female respondents have a moderate level of writing anxiety, while 16.4% of them experience a high anxiety level. Additionally, the level of anxiety is distributed among 52.0% of male respondents and 48.0% of female respondents respectively. As depicted in Table 3, the Chi-square test reveals no significant difference (p>0.05) in the level of anxiety of male and female respondents.

Discussion
Using descriptive analysis, this study has reached two significant outcomes. First, most Libyan postgraduates studying in Malaysia experience a moderate level of written communication anxiety. This outcome contradicts Elkali’s (2018) findings that most Libyan students experience a high level of anxiety in their country. Nevertheless, this contradiction supports the theoretical presumption of FLA that language anxiety has a strong connection with the learning context (Horwitz et al., 1986). The level of anxiety is a major concern as most postgraduate students use English to write their theses and dissertations in Malaysian universities (Almatarneh et al., 2018). There might be various reasons for Libyan students’ high levels of anxiety. For instance, English was introduced in the fifth grade in 1966 and later abolished in 1969 when the Libyan government focused on teaching standard Arabic in schools. However, in 1996, the Ministry of Education established several English training centers to address the shortage of English teachers. English instructors from various countries, including Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine, were hired (Mohammed, 2005).

Subsequently, private centers were established, and unqualified instructors were hired to teach English, regardless of their credentials, teaching experience, or majors (Maghur, 2010). As a result, attaining a high level of English proficiency among most Libyan graduates becomes a major challenge. Besides, the findings reported in this study revealed no significant difference in the level of anxiety of male and female Libyan postgraduates studying in Malaysian universities. This outcome indicates that gender is not a significant determinant of written communication anxiety among Libyan postgraduates in Malaysian universities. As such, male students are slightly more anxious than female students in this regard. This outcome concurs with the findings reported by Alsalooli and Al-Tale (2022) that gender does not have a significant effect on EFL learners’ level of anxiety in the Saudi context. However, these findings contradict many previous studies on gender differences in FLA across different contexts (Al-Kubaisy et al., 2019; Geçkin, 2020). As mentioned earlier, this inconsistency indicates the need to further investigate the relationship between gender and anxiety in the foreign language context.

Conclusion
This study examined gender differences in the level of written communication anxiety amongst Libyan postgraduates studying in Malaysian universities. According to the findings, most Libyan students experience a moderate level of writing anxiety. As the findings of a previous local study revealed a high level of anxiety among Libyan students, the current investigation supports the hypothetical viewpoint of FLA that language anxiety relates to the learning context. Additionally, no significant differences exist between male and female students regarding the level of written communication anxiety. The significance of this study lies in its provision of empirical evidence on gender differences among international students’ levels of written communication anxiety. Considering the information regarding students’ demographic factors, such as gender differences, instructors and relevant authorities can help students to overcome writing anxiety and achieve
positive learning outcomes. However, this quantitative analysis is limited to the role of gender in determining the level of written communication anxiety among Libyan postgraduates in Malaysia and does not consider the types of anxiety. Thus, further research may look specifically into the types of anxiety experienced by Libyan students across gender. Additionally, further studies may consider undergraduates’ levels of anxiety. Also, a qualitative study can be conducted to provide an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon.

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The Use of Social Media Text-Based Exercises to Promote University Students’ Knowledge of Non-Academic and Academic English Language

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Abstract
In this digital era, students tend to write more for non-academic purposes on social media platforms by using informal language. Consequently, they become familiar with the informal writing style and use non-academic language in academic writing. This research, therefore, aims to discover 1) what are the results of using the social media text-based exercises developed by the researchers in promoting university students’ knowledge of non-academic and academic English language, and 2) what are the students’ attitudes toward the use of social media text-based exercises. The instruments included four sets of social media text-based exercises, a pre-test, a post-test, and an open-ended questionnaire. Participants were 96 third-year English major students enrolling in the Academic Writing course, sections 1, 2, and 3 in the 1st semester, the academic year 2021 of a university in Thailand. The findings showed that the social media text-based exercises were effective in promoting the students’ knowledge of the non-academic and academic language. Questionnaire respondents expressed great attitudes toward the exercises. They believed the materials enabled them to analyze and identify distinct features of the registers in non-academic and academic writing. Additionally, they mentioned that learning through the exercises was interesting, enjoyable, and understandable. The study also provided suggestions for improving the exercises.

Keywords: Academic English language, non-academic English language, social media, social media text-based exercises

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Introduction

For learning English at all levels of education, students are required to learn four primary skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, Walsh (2010) stated that writing is essential for tertiary education and profession. Writing for Educational and professional communication can be done through proposals, essays, reports, memos, e-mails, and applications. When the students do not know how to express their thought and ideas in writing, they cannot communicate well with teachers, classmates, colleagues, employers, and customers.

In education, writing that students perform to meet the requirements of school subjects or university courses is considered academic writing. Academic writing is also known as writing tasks published and read by teachers and researchers or presented at conferences. A very prevalent meaning of academic writing can include any writing tasks assigned to the students in an educational context. Common academic writing types include notes, reports, projects, essays, dissertations or thesis, and papers (Bailey, 2018; Whitaker, 2010). In short, academic writing is writing activities writers perform in an educational setting to achieve their academic goals.

According to Bailey (2018), academic writing is clear and purposive. It mainly aims to describe the research findings, answer some questions, discuss some topics and convey writers’ messages. Additionally, Whitaker (2010) explains that academic writing has three primary purposes: persuasive, analytical, and informative. A persuasive academic paper aims to convince readers to agree with the responses to a question. To do so, the writer selects one answer to a question and supports their opinion using some reasons and evidence so that the readers change their viewpoint about the topic. Analytical academic writing aims to explain and evaluate possible answers to some questions, then choose the best answer(s) based on the writer’s criteria. The analytical writing tasks usually examine causes and effects, evaluate the effectiveness of something, assess the solutions to specific problems, investigate the relationships between different ideas, or analyze others’ arguments. Finally, informative academic writing aims to describe possible answers to the selected questions or give the readers new information about the chosen topic. The purpose of informative writing is different from analytical writing. A writer does not push their points of view on readers but instead expands the readers’ perspectives. Sowton and Kennedy (2017) state that the register or language style of academic writing is formal, complex, and precise. Academic writing tends to avoid using language similar to speaking such as phrasal verbs and contractions. Based on the abovementioned, academic writing uses formal language styles. Academic writing is essential for students because it is usually a requirement to achieve their educational goals.

Apart from writing for academic purposes, outside the school context, students write to satisfy their personal needs. This writing practice is called non-academic writing. It is not related to subjects, courses, projects, or any assignments in school or college (Amicucci, 2013). Rosinski (2017) also proposes that the writers produce non-academic texts because they want to do. They are not assigned to do for their school or university requirements. Non-academic texts include personal journal entries, social media posts, blogs, videos or memes, fiction, and letters to friends or family. Students may write non-academic texts on paper (e.g., notebooks and sticky notes) and on digital platforms (e.g., social media). Likewise, the GeeksforGeek website (GeeksforGeeks, 2020) states non-academic text means a piece of writing that does not focus on an academic topic.
and is not for academic readers. The nature of this text type is personal, emotional, or subjective. Some examples of non-academic texts are magazine articles, personal or business letters, websites, short stories, novels, and text messages. Non-academic writing employs informal language used in speaking. Its features include colloquial, first and second personal pronouns, and contractions (Sowton & Kennedy, 2017). In conclusion, non-academic texts are for personal purposes rather than academic objectives.

Recently, in a non-academic setting, students write or text more using social networking sites (Yancey, 2009). Writing for school and social media is different in terms of purposes and language types. However, there has been empirical evidence showing that students face problems in academic writing practice due to their familiarity with the non-academic writing mode. Texting on digital platforms resulted in a change in people’s writing styles. There is evidence from the studies showing that when students chatted with others, they omitted subject pronouns and articles. They also misspelled words when they communicated on social networking sites. These features hindered academic writing ability when they wrote academic work such as term papers, essays, or other writing assignments (Hezili, 2010). Moreover, Banda (2017) and Finley (2014) discovered that students confronted difficulties in academic writing because of the lack of awareness of the differences between non-academic and academic language. As a result, they used non-formal discourse patterns and sentence structures in school writing. In other words, they used spoken English in writing their essays Using informal language reflected low writing proficiency in the academic context. Betal (2014) also found the students used word shortening and ungrammatical sentence structure in formal writing. This writing style on social media made them familiar with these language types and used them in formal writing.

However, the previous studies suggested that non-academic texts could help students identify different linguistic features between academic and non-academic settings (Okada 2010). The students in the study of Amicucci (2013) admitted that they could apply the practices in non-academic digital literacies to writing courses. Some participants suggested that non-academic digital literacies should be integrated more into the classroom because they realized the possibilities of such practices in promoting their academic writing. Moreover, Idrus and Abdul Muijib (2014) compared and analyzed the samples of students’ writing assignments and their posts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The findings showed that the students’ non-academic literacy practices supported English academic writing. Furthermore, Derakhshan and Hasanabbasi (2015) insist on social networking sites as practical learning tools to improve students’ writing skills.

It could be seen from the previous studies that there is a connection between non-academic and academic writing. Non-academic writing on social network platforms has adverse effects on academic writing. On the other hand, social media writing practices can help students to improve academic writing skills. These findings confirm that non-academic texts are beneficial for teaching English in school. Therefore, to help students to gain more fundamental knowledge of the non-academic and academic language and differentiate the two styles of writing, the researcher incorporates non-academic texts written on social media into academic English writing exercises. This study applies the term non-academic texts in line with the definition proposed by Rosinski (2017). They are the texts produced based on the writers’ personal needs, not an educational...
requirement on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter posts and text messaging. The underpinning concept of using social media texts as authentic materials in English language learning was employed. Authentic materials are produced by real authors for a real audience to deliver a real message in the real world (Gilmore, 2007). Although they are not created especially for the classroom, authentic materials are splendid learning tools because they bridge the classroom to the outside world. Teachers can engage students in learning activities by bringing authentic materials into class, and asking students to learn and discuss several aspects such as cultural perspectives and language features (Ianiro, 2007).

This study developed exercises using social media texts to enhance students’ knowledge of non-academic and academic English writing. The exercises focused on different writing styles, along with using contractions and full forms of verb, non-academic and academic vocabulary, and phrasal verbs and academic verbs. Additionally, the study investigated their effectiveness by comparing the students’ pre-test and post-test scores and explored their attitudes towards using the exercises. The study’s contribution can be examples of creating English lessons for academic English writing from social media texts. It can guide other teachers to utilize authentic texts produced beyond the classroom in designing teaching materials. Moreover, the findings can prove the effectiveness of using this kind of text to improve students’ understanding and knowledge of academic writing. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the results of using the social media text-based exercises developed by the researchers in promoting university students’ knowledge of non-academic and academic English language?
2. What are the students’ attitudes on using the social media text-based exercises?

Literature Review

Academic writing

White (n.d.) defines academic writing as a formal writing mode that students in schools and colleges are required to compose for their classes, and teachers or researchers write for academic publication. There are different types of academic writing since writers produce it for various reasons. Also, Oshima and Hogue (2007) state that academic writing is the writing mode employed in educational institutions. According to Whitaker (2010), students do academic writing to complete their courses in university. Common academic writing could be reports, projects, essays, dissertations or thesis, term papers, abstracts, research proposals, research papers, journal articles, conference papers, or textbooks (Bailey, 2018; Oshima, & Hogue, 2007; White, n.d.; Whitaker, 2010). In sum, academic writing is writing activities that scholars or students perform in the educational setting to achieve their academic goals.

Due to the formal feature of academic writing language, a writer should avoid using slang and contractions, and the writer should pay attention to the correctness of sentence structures and the logical organization of ideas (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). The register in academic writing is more precise and uses technical words, more formal phrases, and transitional words (Sowton & Kennedy, 2017). Although this writing mode has a particular structure for each type of writing and a specific style in each area, the typical structure of academic writing requires a writer to
categorize similar ideas in one paragraph or section (Rogers & Wilkin, 2013). For instance, the structure of essay writing composes of introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs.

Academic writing is clear and purposive. This kind of writing commonly aims to report the results or findings of the research that writers conducted, provide answers to a question that the writers are given or selected, discuss some topics and express the writers’ points of view, and synthesize studies done by other researchers (Bailey, 2018). Additionally, Whitaker (2010) describes that academic writing has three purposes: persuasive, analytical, and informative. A persuasive academic paper aims to convince readers to agree with the writers’ responses to a question. To do so, the writers select one answer to the question and support their opinions using some reasons and evidence so that the readers change their viewpoint about the topic. Persuasive writing assignments can be argumentative and position papers. Analytical academic writing aims to explain and evaluate possible answers to some questions, then choose the best answer(s) based on the writers’ criteria. Analytical writing tasks usually examine causes and effects, evaluate the effectiveness of something, assess the solutions to some problems, investigate the relationships between different ideas, or analyze others’ arguments. Analytical assignments can be analytic papers and critical analyses. Finally, informative academic writing aims to describe possible answers to chosen questions or give the readers new information about the selected topic. Writing for this purpose is different from analytical writing in that the writers do not push their points of view on the readers but expands the readers’ viewpoints instead.

**Non-academic texts**

Non-academic texts refer to different forms of texts that are not relevant to any courses or projects at the writers’ school or university (Amicucci, 2013). Rosinski (2017) also proposed that the writers produce non-academic texts because they want to do. They are not assigned to do for their school or university requirements. Non-academic texts include personal journal entries, social media posts, blogs, videos or memes, fiction, and letters to friends or family. Writers can write on paper (e.g., notebooks and sticky notes) and digital platforms (e.g., social media). According to the GeeksforGeek website (GeeksforGeeks, 2020), the non-academic text means a piece of writing that does not focus on an educational topic and is not for academic readers. The nature of this text type is personal, emotional, or subjective. Some examples of non-academic texts are magazine articles, Personal or business letters, websites, short stories, novels, and text messages. In conclusion, non-academic texts are written for personal purposes rather than academic objectives.

**Social media language**

Texting on digital platforms resulted in a change in people’s writing styles. There is evidence from the studies showing that when students chatted with others, they omitted subject pronouns and articles. Also, the language used in communication on social networking sites could misspell. These features hindered academic writing ability when they wrote academic work such as term papers, essays, or other writing assignments (Hezili, 2010). Abbasova (2019) found that writing on social media has changed the typical writing styles. Adolescents often used general emojis that were difficult to understand, and they tended to usually use shortening forms of words such as LOL = lots of love or laughing out loud, WTF = what the fuck, and BFF = Best friends forever. Moreover, social media users delete some letters, such as vowels, and use numbers with
the letters and punctuation marks to show that the sentence is complete. Also, letter and number homonymous abbreviations have evolved. Letters or numbers are used to replace a word having the same pronunciation. For example, the phrase ‘See you’ was written ‘CU’, or the phrase ‘for u’ was written ‘4 u’. Rosinski (2017) mentioned the texts posted on social media are one kind of non-academic text. This study, therefore, employs produced by the students based on their personal needs on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter posts and text messaging.

**Authentic materials**

The underpinning concept of this study is using authentic materials in English language learning. According to Gilmore (2007), “An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort” (p. 98). Ianiro (2007) defines authentic materials as print, video, and audio materials which learners face in their routine. The materials are divided into two main groups: print and auditory. The printed authentic materials can include street signs, newspapers, magazines, websites, menus, and greeting cards. In contrast, authentic audio materials can be phone messages, radio and TV programs, movies, and podcasts. Although they are not created especially for the classroom, authentic materials are splendid learning tools because they connect the classroom to the outside world. Teachers can engage students in learning activities by asking them to bring authentic materials into class, and learn and discuss several aspects such as cultural perspectives and language features.

Based on the definitions mentioned above, the texts written on social media platforms are authentic materials because they are written by real-world authors for a real audience. The students can find this kind of authentic text in their daily lives. Yancey (2009) suggests that the texts students write on social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and blogs are informal. These texts are different from academic texts written for academic purposes in school. However, Derakhshan and Hasanabbasi (2015) insist social networking sites as effective learning tools to improve students’ writing skills.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The participants of this study were chosen by using purposive sampling with the criteria. The determining criteria were the students who enrolled Academic Writing course in the 1st semester, the academic year 2021 of a university in Thailand. Based on the criteria, the participants were 96 third-year students majoring in English who were randomly assigned to three intact groups (e.g., sections one, two, and three) by the Division of Educational Services of the university. All participants participated in the experiment, and 42 out of 96 participants gave responses to an open-ended questionnaire.

**Instruments**

**Social media text-based exercises**

In this study, the teacher-researcher created four sets of exercises. All social media texts and words or phrases used to develop the exercises were from posts, comments, and chatting on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook Messenger by English major students who enrolled in an Academic English course at the University of Phayao in the 2nd
semester, the academic year 2020. They were willing to bring the research their texts. The researcher used the compiled social media texts, academic texts collected from some textbooks, and samples of students’ essays in the previous semester to develop the materials.

The social media text-based exercises developed and used in this study were as follows:

- **Exercise A: Identifying non-academic and academic writing**
  
  This exercise required the students to analyze the features of non-academic and academic language. The students should write N for non-academic statements and write A for academic statements. Also, the students needed to highlight the words or phrases in each statement that showed the features of non-academic or academic writing. Exercise A comprised 20 items, and it aimed to raise awareness of the different traits of non-academic language used in social media and academic language used in writing assignments.

- **Exercise B: Rewriting the sentences by using full forms of verbs to replace contractions**
  
  For exercise B, the students needed to rewrite ten sentences by replacing the contractions in each sentence with full forms of verbs. The purpose of this part was to remind students that they should not use contractions in academic writing.

- **Exercise C: Matching informal words or phrases to the appropriate academic words**

  Exercise C had students match 25 informal words and phrases on the left column to academic terms in the right column. This exercise focused on promoting students’ academic vocabulary range.

- **Exercise D: Using academic verbs to replace the phrasal verbs**

  The last exercise required students to replace the phrasal verbs in ten sentences with the correct academic verbs in the box. The exercise aimed to extend students’ academic vocabulary range and demonstrate that they should avoid using phrasal verbs when writing in an academic context.

After the development, the social media text-based exercises were evaluated by three experts in the fields of English writing teaching by using the item objective congruence index (IOC). The IOC scores of exercise A ranged from 0.67 – 1.00, and every item in Exercise B had a 1.00 score. For exercise C, the scores were from 0.67 – 1.00, and all items of Exercise D obtained 1.00. The total IOC score for four exercises was 0.98. The results showed that all items of the social media text-based exercises gained acceptable IOC scores and had content validity.

Next, the pilot study was conducted with 26 students who enrolled in the Academic Writing course in the summer of the academic year 2020 at a university in Thailand. The post-test scores of the pilot group were significantly different from the pre-test scores at the significant level of 0.05. The results pointed out that using social media text-based exercises to enhance the ability to differentiate between non-academic and academic English language was feasible.

*Pre-test and Post-test*
The pre-test and post-test consisted of four main parts. Part one was about matching informal words and phrases to the appropriate academic language. Part two required students to rewrite given sentences using the full forms of verbs to replace the contractions. In part three, students selected the correct given academic words to replace non-academic words or phrases in given sentences. Finally, in part four, they were asked to identify seven informal words or phrases in the given text and replace them with the given formal (academic) words or phrases.

The pre-test and post-test were verified validity by three experts in the field of English writing teaching using the Item Objective Congruence (IOC). The IOC value of the pre-test was 0.96, and IOC index of the post-test was 0.95. Next, the tests were tried out with 42 second-year English major students to calculate the difficulty level (p) and discrimination power (r). The difficulty level of the items in the pre-test ranged from 0.20 - 0.78, which was a reasonable level, and discrimination power varied from 0.23 – 0.76, which showed fair, high, and very high discrimination ability. Similarly, the level of difficulty of the post-test ranged from 0.21 – 0.79, and the post-test had fair, high, and very high ability of discrimination with 0.21 – 0.69 value. Based on the index of difficulty and discrimination of Whitney and Sabers (1970), the items of pre-test and post-test had an acceptable level of difficulty and discrimination power. They, therefore, were applicable.

After the verification of difficulty level and discrimination power, the pre-test and post-test were verified the reliability by examining parallelism using a t-test and correlation using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. There was no statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test at a significant level .05. This meant the tests had parallelism. The Pearson’s correlation coefficient score of the pre-test and the post-test was 0.826 at a significant level .05. According to Nettleton (2014), the value of the correlation of 0.70 and higher pointed out a significantly positive relationship between the two variables. Hence, it was shown that the pre-test and the post-test had parallelism. The tests could be able to evaluate students’ abilities similarly. The analysis of the t-test and Pearson’s correlation signified that the pre-test and post-test are reliable and applicable.

Open-ended questionnaire

The open-ended questionnaire required the students to reflect on their thought about the effectiveness of the exercises. Also, it asked them to provide suggestions for improvement of the materials. The questionnaire comprised three questions: 1) How can the social media text-based exercises promote your knowledge of non-academic and academic writing? (2) What do you think about the social media text-based exercises? and (3) What are your suggestions for improving the social media text-based exercises?

The questionnaire was evaluated by three experts in the field of English writing teaching using the Item Objective Congruence (IOC), and the IOC index was 0.95.

Data Collection

The data were collected during the 1st semester, the academic year 2021, after the ethical approval of Ethical Considerations Involved in Research on Human Subjects of the University of Phayao Human Ethics Committee. The participants participated in the study through the MS
Teams platform. At the beginning, the researcher introduced background information about the study including the research title, the research objectives, and the research procedure. Afterward, a consent form was used to obtain the informed consent, and the pre-test was administered for 40 minutes. Next, the social media text-based exercises were implemented in unit one of the course. Then, the post-test was undertaken for 40 minutes. Finally, the participants who were willing to provide information about their attitudes on the exercises gave responses to the open-ended questionnaire.

**Data analysis**

1. The pre-test and post-test scores were compared using mean, standard deviation, and t-test.
2. The data on the participants’ attitudes toward the social media text-based exercises from the questionnaire were analyzed using content analysis. The participants’ responses were translated into English, and the data were categorized based on the specific words or phrases in the responses. Next, each category was assigned the code using a number. Then the researcher read the data line-by-line and coded them based on the designated number. Finally, the data in each category were read carefully to check if the results of the analysis were consistent.

**Results**

**RQ1:** What are the results of using the social media text-based exercises developed by the researchers in promoting university students’ knowledge of non-academic and academic English language?

The results of comparing pre-test and post-test scores were presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>11.66</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>26.84</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P < .05

Based on Table 1, the mean score of the post-test (\(\bar{X} = 26.84, SD. = 6.71\)) was higher than the mean of the pre-test (\(\bar{X} = 18.00, SD. 8.77\)). There were statistically significant differences between the pre-test and the post-test scores at the significant level 0.05. This indicated that the social media text-based exercises could promote the knowledge of non-academic and academic writing styles, using contractions and full forms of verb, non-academic and academic vocabulary, and using phrasal verbs and academic verbs.

**RQ 2: What are the students’ attitudes on using social media text-based exercises?**

There were 42 out of 96 participants who voluntarily responded to the open-ended the questionnaire with three main questions: (1) How can the social media text-based exercises promote your knowledge of non-academic and academic writing? (2) What do you think about the social media text-based exercises? and (3) What are your suggestions for improving the social media text-based exercises?
How can the social media text-based exercises promote your knowledge of non-academic and academic writing?

All respondents believed the social media text-based exercises could enhance their knowledge of the language used in non-academic and academic contexts. First, the exercises provided them with an understanding of two language styles used in two writing contexts, so they gained more knowledge of non-academic and academic writing. In addition, the students thought the social media text-based exercises enabled them to practice analyzing the features of the academic and non-academic language. Therefore, they improved their ability to distinguish the register in two writing modes. Finally, the exercises contained understandable examples of vocabulary, sentences, and statements on the digital platforms they have found in their daily life and were familiar with. As a result, they were aware that they should not use informal language on social networking sites in academic writing assignments. The exercises could help them to select the appropriate words for the writing contexts. For example, they stated:

“This is the first time I have learned that I should not use informal words in academic writing. The exercises help me to differentiate formal and informal words and provide me with new knowledge in academic writing.”

“The exercises provide me with a chance to practice analyzing the language used in non-academic and academic writing.”

“Doing these exercises help me a lot because the sentences and texts in the exercises are from social media which I frequently use in my daily life. I think that some words and texts are academic languages. After doing the exercises, I’ve learned that I misused them:

In brief, students’ knowledge improvement was because of acquiring more knowledge of two different writing modes, having a chance to practice analyzing different features of non-academic and academic language, and learning differences between academic and non-academic language from good and understandable examples from real-world texts.

What do you think about the social media text-based exercises?

Most respondents (40 out of 42) expressed positive attitudes toward the social media text-based exercises. The exercises were not complicated and easy to understand for them. The sentences and statements in the exercises were taken from social media which the students frequently used in their real life. Furthermore, they believed that these teaching materials were very beneficial for learning new words and sentence structures. They had a chance to analyze the language features in both non-academic and academic contexts. Additionally, they could apply the examples in the exercises to writing on social networking sites. They also could apply knowledge to academic writing to meet the course requirements. Finally, the exercises were engaging since they were created based on social media texts. Thus, the students enjoyed learning by using these exercises. As an illustration, they mentioned:
“They are good exercises. They are easy to understand. I can see examples of social media texts used in everyday life, and I can clearly classify the types of language in writing.”

“I think I can apply the knowledge from the exercises to writing to communicate with others on social media and select the appropriate language style for academic and non-academic writing, so I like them.”

“The teacher took the examples of social media texts, so the exercises are interesting and help the students to notice the differences in words and sentence structures used in formal and informal writing.”

Conversely, two respondents perceived that the exercises were difficult for them. It was because the materials contained some unfamiliar words. They described:

“The contents of the exercises are difficult to understand because they have both academic and non-academic language.”

“There are new words, expressions, and sentences that I am unfamiliar with, so some parts are difficult for me.”

In summary, most respondents had great attitudes towards the materials because they were understandable, effective, and engaging. They also believed they could apply the contents of the exercises to writing in their real life both for personal and academic purposes. However, some of them felt that the exercises were difficult as they were unfamiliar with the contents of the materials.

*What are your suggestions for improving the social media text-based exercises?*

Most respondents were satisfied with the exercises. However, certain students suggested that the teacher should provide more explanations and examples to help them understand the contents clearer. In addition, the format of Exercise C should be changed from matching non-academic words in column A with academic words in Column B to choosing the correct academic words from multiple choices to complete the sentences. They also suggested that the teacher should add more items with a variety of commonly used words and statements so that the students could learn the non-academic and academic vocabulary and sentences from the exercises. Interestingly, they recommended that the exercises should be changed from paper-based to online materials so that the exercises would be more interesting and engaging. The respondents suggested that:

“The teacher should provide more obvious examples and explanation before having the students do the exercises. This could promote students’ understanding.”

“The teacher should add more samples of vocabulary and sentences. They could help students understand clearer.”
“In exercise C, there were 2 columns with 25 words each. When matching informal words with their academic words, I get confused because there were too many items. I think it would be better if the teacher could change the format from matching to multiple-choice a, b, c in each item.”

“The teacher should integrate online technology into the exercises to make them more exciting and interesting.”

Discussion

The t-test analysis discovered that after using social media text-based exercises, the participants’ post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test. Therefore, the exercises are productive in promoting students’ knowledge of non-academic and academic writing. Songxaba and Sincuba (2019) suggest that the teacher could use the texts on social media platforms (i.e., WhatsApp) to empower the development of teaching materials. The social media texts would help the students to be aware of the mistakes and avoid making them when they write their academic work such as an essay. Wil, Yunus, and Suliman (2019) confirmed that using authentic texts on digital platforms and academic texts could support students’ learning. They acquired knowledge from examples of two writing modes and differentiated the features of the academic and non-academic language. Consequently, students understood the differences between the two writing contexts better.

The qualitative data findings from the open-ended questionnaire aligned with the analysis of pre-test and post-test scores. The respondents reported that the exercises were effective because they could learn more informal and formal vocabulary, expressions, and sentence structures. They understood that some words and phrasal verbs they are familiar with should be substituted with academic words or formal structures when they produce essays or papers. Also, the materials made the learning environment enjoyable since they were understandable and interesting. The exercises contained the real-world texts written on the social media platforms they found in their daily lives, so they could understand and notice the differences between non-academic and academic texts. Even though there were some unknown words or expressions, they were enthusiastic about learning the meanings to understand how to use them correctly and reduce the errors when they practice academic writing. They also believed they could apply the knowledge acquired from the exercises to writing in real situations, both in academic and non-academic settings.

Although there were differences between social media language and formal language in academic writing, social media texts could be used as a catalyst to improve students’ knowledge of academic writing. Social media texts are authentic materials connecting the classroom to the real world. They can enable students to learn language features (Ianiro, 2007). Furthermore, Okoda (2010) found that using academic texts in coursebooks and non-academic short stories could improve students’ linguistic knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary. They could notice and be aware of their differences. This reaffirmed Amicucci (2013)’s study. The participants in the previous study perceived that they could apply non-academic digital writing to academic writing at their university, and they could improve their academic writing ability by using non-academic digital literacies. Therefore, they required the integration of non-academic written
practices into the classroom. Likewise, the study of Idrus and Muijib (2014) showed that non-academic literacy practices could enhance English academic writing.

However, from the perspective of two respondents, the social media text-based exercises were not easy for them because of their unfamiliarity with the social media words used in the materials. This could occur with some Thai EFL learners. In the EFL context, the learners mainly practice English skills in the English classroom. They do not commonly use English in routine communication because they can use their mother tongue as a primary language. Some learners may not write on social media in English, so they are unfamiliar with the language styles of this register. In countries where English is used as a foreign language, not the first or official language, English is not essential for daily communication. The EFL non-native users have a chance to expose to English in the classroom and workplace only, so they rarely use English in social interaction (Chuenchaichon, 2014; Iwai, 2011; Peng, 2019).

**Conclusion**

The present study examined the effects of the social media text-based exercises developed by the researcher to enhance the university students’ basic knowledge of the academic and non-academic language. Also, the study explored the students’ attitudes toward using the exercises. The t-test analysis discovered that after using social media text-based exercises, the participants’ post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test. The pre-test and post-test score analysis was in line with the qualitative findings. The interviewees confirmed that the social media text-based exercises provided them with the opportunities to analyze the features of non-academic and academic writing and enabled them to learn both informal and formal vocabulary, expressions, and sentence structures. Hence, they could differentiate between non-academic and academic language. Also, the exercises were interesting and understandable, and they enjoyed learning. Nonetheless, two respondents reported that the social media text-based exercises were difficult for them because they were unfamiliar with the social media texts used in the exercises.

The findings of the study offered some recommendations. The exercises should be improved by integrating online technology. Moreover, to expand students’ learning experience, the teacher should add more samples of vocabulary and statements written on social media platforms. For further research, the student’s academic writing tasks should be examined to see whether there are features of non-academic writing on social networking sites in academic writing after using the exercises.

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References


The Impact of Education on Language Use in the Algerian Context

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Abstract
This research paper attempts to examine the impact of education on language use, i.e., highlighting the sociolinguistic variable, mainly that of education and age, and how it may affect the linguistic behavior in the Arabic Nedroma speech community as a sample population. Nedromi speakers, especially the new generation, tend to correct mistakes; they look at them as stigmatized features in their speech and thus, try to shift to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). In this regard, the researcher attempts to determine the reasons behind such a change in linguistic behaviors essentially motivated by the influence of education. Methodological triangulation was used in this study. Data were collected through observation, questionnaire, and interview. Based on both quantitative and qualitative methods, the findings reveal that the choice of specific linguistic features by the individual is determined by the speaker’s age category, his level of education, and most importantly, his attitude towards specific linguistic characteristics.

Keywords: age, Algerian context, education, language variability, linguistic features, Nedromi Arabic

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Introduction

Language is viewed as one of the powerful mediums of communication in any speech community. It has attracted the attention of many language scholars, who adopted and adapted various approaches and methods for investigating the complexity and particularity of this natural phenomenon. There is no doubt that language differs considerably across different countries, within the same country where some local varieties can co-exist, and even among individuals. It could also happen that some may have numerous linguistic forms to express the same thought. This fact is explained by sociolinguists as language variability and language variation. The study of sociolinguistic variation came to light in the 1960s, partly as a result of inadequate methods in earlier approaches to the study of dialects, and partly as a reaction to Chomskyan linguistic theory, which has neglected the study of language in its social context.

Language variation, as a revealing area of interest, has been a matter of hot debate and discussion among a lot of sociolinguists at many levels, but it was Labov (1960) who carried out such kind of studies; as he focused his research on the relationship which may be set up between social structure and linguistic structure. The social variables as the speaker’s age, gender, and level of education, whereas the linguistic variables, involve phonological, morphological, and lexical levels of analysis.

The present research paper is set out to describe and analyze the linguistic features characterizing Nedroma, and how some of these linguistic features are dropped by a community category. In showing this, the researcher will try to correlate linguistic features with social variables, and try to show the impact of education, in addition to age, on language variation and even change, as some characteristics are dropped in the speech community of Nedroma. For these purposes, the problem issue of this research work is summarised around the following research question: what is the rationale behind the Nedromi speakers’ negative attitude towards their speech community, and why do they change some of their linguistic behaviors?

In this respect, it is hypothesized that after receiving formal school education, the new generation of Nedroma Arabic speakers considers some of their local linguistic features as being stigmatized and expressing a poor linguistic level of formality.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first one provides a review of the literature about the importance of investigating language in its social context, for a better understanding of the relationship between linguistic structures and social structures. After that, it gives an overview of the linguistic varieties used in Algeria. Section two is the practical part which covers the research design and methodology. It elucidates the sample population participating in this investigation as well as the research tools used for gathering data. Finally, the third section presents the results obtained from our study and deals with their analysis and interpretation.

Literature Review

Sociolinguistics and Language Development

Before the advent of sociolinguistics, language was studied in “abstraction from society in which it operates” (Lyons, 1981, p.221), as treated by De Saussure (1916) and Chomsky (1965). These two scholars believe that language is a homogeneous system; for them, there are rules which
govern the proper use of the language. In this respect, Chomsky (1965) differentiates between ‘competence’ and ‘performance’; this dissimilarity was inspired by De Saussure, who set apart ‘langue’ from ‘parole’. From this perspective, competence describes the knowledge that a native speaker has of the principles which allow for the use of a particular language. Performance conversely is putting that knowledge into acts of speaking. Emphasizing linguistic competence made performance neglected and deemed. It was dismissed as a free variation not worthy of scientific research. Chomsky stated that when speaking, people often make linguistic errors; he asserted that these errors in linguistic performance were irrelevant to the study of linguistic competence, and thus linguists can study an idealized version of the language.

Eventually, the intricacy of language is not merely based on the linguistic system itself, as described by Chomsky, but also results from the reality of language as applicable in different forms and contexts to impart a message, belief, thoughts, or perceptions as well. This helps to a great extent to demonstrate the interlocutors’ social background and geographical belonging. This assumption urged specialists to examine the concept of language variability, and therefore, the research issue of linguistic differences became, as Hymes (1970) put it, the relationship between language and society; he assumes that sociolinguistics intends to address the following questions: who speaks, what language, to whom, and on what occasion? Wardhaugh (2006) argued that “asocial linguistics is scarcely worthwhile and that meaningful insights into language can be gained only if such matters as use and variation are included as part of the data, which must be explained in a comprehensive theory of language” (p. 5).

Studying language about society was first considered by Labov (1972), who indicates that: “Every linguist recognizes that language is a social fact, but not everyone puts an equal emphasis on that fact” (p. 261). His work, which consisted of studying sociolinguistic variation in New York City, affected scholars with an interest in social interpretation. Many exciting facts would be missed in the study of language abstracted from its context. From this perspective, Hudson (1996) stated that “to study language without correlating it to society would mean to exclude the possibility of finding social explanations for any particular linguistic features” (p. 13).

Labov (1960) challenged all those who ignored the heterogeneity of language, and considered it as a set of grammatically correct sentences. Labov stressed tackling language use (performance), and language heterogeneity, i.e., variability. He believed that linguistic theory has to cover both the formal linguistic structure and every social function that is related to language in one way or another.

Several factors affect language use, including social class, geographical location, ethnicity, age, gender, education…etc. Sociolinguistics often comes across as either too restricting to social categories such as class, gender, style and geography (the external factors), or too restricting to linguistic categories such as systems and rate of change (the structural elements).

Language offers more details about the speaker’s individuality and reveals, such as their group membership (social class) termed as language variation according to the user, i.e., language which reveals the speaker’s belonging, gender, age, social class, ethnicity… etc. Thus, it sounds necessary to study the most influential paradigms affecting the way people speak.
Language variation often cares for clearing up the connection between variables and social factors. The researcher has tried to provide a better understanding of the field. Among the significant contributions of sociolinguistic studies is that language variation is not random. In their studies, sociolinguists examined the frequencies of each linguistic feature to show the correlations between dependent (linguistic) and independent (social) variables, and to what extent these latter variables shape our use of language.

**Language Attitude**

In communities where different varieties co-exist, people may show either positive or negative attitudes towards these languages. This phenomenon studied by sociolinguists is called language attitude. It is defined as the speaker’s reaction or feeling toward language. Trudgill (1992) pointed out, that these attitudes “may range from very favorable to very unfavorable, and may be manifested in subjective judgments about the ‘correctness’, worth, and aesthetic qualities of varieties, as well as about the personal qualities of their speakers” (p. 44). The choice of specific linguistic features by the individual is determined by the speaker’s category and his attitude towards specific linguistic characteristics. The speaker’s intention behind the use of specific linguistic features is due to personal motives in addition to psychological matters.

It is highly believed that attitudes influence language use and behaviors. Cohen (2007) suggested that: “attitudes are always seen as precursors of behavior, as determinants of how a person will behave in his daily affairs” (p. 138). Reasonably, people’s behavior would reflect the attitudes they hold.

**The Sociolinguistic Situation in Algeria: A Brief Background Account**

Algeria is a culturally and linguistically diverse North African country. It has been home to many civilizations and therefore witnessed a large flow of migrants who settled there; together, they have shaped a detailed linguistic picture that can be attested in Algeria.

Algerian history is one of repeated invasions. It is commonly approved among historians that the original inhabitants of Algeria were the Berbers. These Berber populations are of unknown origin, but Camps (1974) affirms that they were the indigenous people of the area. The latter spoke the Tamazight language, which gave birth to different Berber varieties present today in Algeria.

The introduction of Islam and Arabic in the 7th century had a profound impact on North Africa. The new widespread religion and language introduced significant transformations from socio-cultural, economic, religious, and linguistic standpoints. All North African countries, including Algeria, accepted little by little the new religion ‘Islam’, and the Berbers willingly agreed to learn and speak Arabic. As a result, it paved the way for the dominance of Arabic over the other already existing language varieties. Watson (2002) said in this respect that: “the rise and expansion of Islam was not only a religious and hence cultural conquest, but also a linguistic conquest” (p. 6). Although the profound impact of the introduction of Islam and Arabic in the country, the influence of Berber vernacular still exists. More importantly, though the Berber variety is used by a minority of the Algerian population (15%), it has been recognized as a national language by a constitutional amendment since May 2002 based on solid social demand for that, and they are still insisting and asking to be a distinct ethnic group.
Arabic appears in three forms which fulfill different sets of functions: Classical Arabic (CA), the language of the Quran; MSA, a simplified version of the former, is used in formal situations, generally associated with media and school-enterprise; and Algerian Arabic (AA) in the form of a wide range of mutually intelligible geographical dialects restricted to informal contexts used spontaneously by the Algerian speakers to communicate.

Every Arab country possesses a distinctive dialect that is unlike the standard Arabic concerning pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Spoken Arabic is the mother tongue of the majority of native Arabic speakers. MSA is not acquired as a mother tongue, but rather it is learned as a second language at schools. It is used in settings where formality is needed, like media, mosque preaches, and school enterprise, and for purposes of written communication, but it can also be used for formal spoken communication as it is understood in all Arabic-speaking regions. MSA emerged in the 19th century with the rise of nationalism; its central premise is that the people of the Arab world, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea, constitute one nation bound together by a common language.

For a clear understanding of the linguistic situation in Algeria, it is needy to outline the noticeable facts that affected the Algerian society; it is the French colonization of the territory. Although the French language has no official status in Algeria today, it is so widespread that you can hear it everywhere in the country. During the French colonization of Algeria, France aimed to destroy the Algerian identity at all levels, politically, linguistically, and culturally. One of the crucial tenets of the French government in Algeria was to eradicate the Arab-Islamic identity and to impose their French language. However, after the independence, and to save and recover the Algerian identity, the Algerian government launched a policy of linguistic Arabisation, as it declared that Arabic is the sole and official language of the country.

Several factors influence one's choice of language; the way people speak, and what words or language they use and choose is often an indicator of their education and status in society.

**Method**

In terms of research method and design, quantitative and qualitative approaches are used to analyze and interpret the collected linguistic data of the selected sample population across different age categories and levels of education in the Nedroma speech community.

The methodology involved in this research work is the Labovian method. Linguistic variables, whether phonological, morphological or lexical, are to be studied quantitatively to the social variables of the Nedroma speech community, in which the researcher has found that age has an association with language accommodation. The level of education also has an impact on language change in the speech community of Nedroma. Our evidence of this language behavior comes from the researcher’s observation of the phenomenon, and to reach this fact, relevant data have been collected.
Participants

The participants involved in this research work are all from Nedroma. The data were collected in primary, middle, and secondary schools, in addition to some participants; we met in the street or in their homes. The research is based on a sample population of 120 informants of different ages (between 5 to 85 years old) and different levels of education. The representation for such categories of informants is shown in the table 1.: 

Table1. Sample Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From 5 to 15 years old (Children and Young adolescents)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 16 to 25 years old (Adolescents)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 26 to 59 years old (Adults)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 60 to 85 years old (Elder informants)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The language variety under investigation in this research work is spoken in an area called ‘Nadroma’; situated in the west of Algeria.

Research Instruments

The first instrument used in this research work is observation. As the researcher is a member of the community under investigation; it has been easy for her to gain a large amount of data, through taking notes from natural interactions or behaviors of Nedromi speakers. Observation has given the researcher a deeper understanding of the community under investigation. The objective of such a method is “to understand the sociolinguistic dynamics of the community from the perspective of the community itself”. (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1996, p. 106). The difficulty of this method is the problem of analyzing the results; this is why other approaches must be combined with such a method.

For the sake of getting reliable data and avoiding the observer’s paradox, the researcher opted for a structured questionnaire. The informants are asked to choose an answer from among a list provided by the researcher. The data were anonymous as the respondents were not asked to provide their names, which gave them a certain freedom in answering naturally. Since the informants are of different ages and distinct levels of education, the questionnaires are written in standard Arabic to facilitate the understanding of various linguistic features characterizing the speech variety of Nedroma.

The recording is another method of data collection that we have used, in particular, because of illiteracy, especially among older people. The conversations have been recorded without the participants being aware, through a hidden recorder, to avoid any pressure on the informants. The recordings took place at home with relatives, with neighbors, and in shops.
Results

Samples of Some Linguistic Variables

Nedroma, situated in the west of Algeria, was constructed by Abdel Moumen Ben Ali, the founder of ‘El Dawla el Mowahidiya’ in 1160 (555 Hegira). The area was previously populated by the Berber tribes. The town was considered the capital of the Trara region; this latter had specific linguistic features. However, later on, and due to many factors like social mobility and the process of Arabisation, some of these linguistic features have changed.

Nedromi Arabic Phonological Variables

The Variable (q)

The /q/ sound is the linguistic feature characterizing the speech community of Nedrma. And by examining some words containing the word [qalli], ‘he said to me’; the data showed the use of this variable by all the informants of the variety. The percentage of the 120 examined speakers is 100%, which shows the maintenance of this sound among speakers.

The Variable (l)

The sound [l], as a realization of the CA phoneme /d/, is one consonants which displays variation. Even though ([d]): [l] is a characteristic feature of Nedromi speech, our observations have revealed that most Nedromi speakers, say that [d] is generally used in words having /d/, particularly in initial and final position, for instance, /d.rab/: ‘he bits’; and /b.ja.d/: ‘white’. However, these words are indeed realized with [l]. We suppose that the speakers do not acknowledge the realization of [l] as characterizing Nedromi speakers. We suppose that these people may unconsciously avoid the stigmatized feature as there is a negative attitude towards the devoicing of [d]. In addition, education today has made people more conscious of the fact and speakers try to avoid it [d]. This change in the phonetic system is reflected through the quantitative results as shown in the table 2:

Table 2. Scores of the variants [l] and [d].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age 5-15</th>
<th>Age 16-25</th>
<th>Age 26-59</th>
<th>Age 60-85</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that age plays a vital role in the varying articulation of [l] and [d]. The use of [d] is highly scored in the first two categories of age compared with the previous two categories, while the use of [l] is highly scored in the last category and decreases in the other categories, as figure 1 below shows:
The researcher noticed that even older females use the voiceless stop [t], which has spread even among younger women and little girls as they acquire their linguistic features from their mothers. On the other hand, as the researcher went back to the questionnaires, she observed that young educated girls realize that [t] is a mistake and try to switch to [d], as in MSA, we say, for instance, /mariiʔa/ and not /marii tə/ (‘ill’. Feminine singular). Amongst educated speakers, this sound has nearly disappeared, while uneducated middle-aged and older women are more likely to use it. Thus, one may corroborate that education plays a significant role in the use of the voiced emphatic [d] instead of its counterpart [t]. A look at the scores confirms that thanks to education, the tendency to use the sound [d] is increasing, while the use of the sound [t] is declining.

**Consonantal Variation [g] and [ʒ]**

Nedromi Arabic (NA) is characterized by the articulation of the CA phoneme /dʒ/ as a back velar [g] in some lexical items, in particular when the word includes either a voiceless fricative [s] or a voiced sibilant [z], as in [gazzaːr] and [gəbs] (‘Butcher, ‘plaster’). The data collection shows that Nedromi speakers tend to substitute the sound [g] with [ʒ], especially by the new generation. To clarify variation in the use of [g] or [ʒ], we have chosen three words: [ʔa ʃdʒizu]: ‘I feel lazy, [dibs]: ‘plaster’, [dʒazzaːr]: ‘butcher’. The results show swinging scores from one age group to another. The following tables summarize the scores of the variable (ʒ) in correlation with age.

**Table 3. Scores of the variants [ʒ] and [g]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age 5-15</th>
<th>Age 16-25</th>
<th>Age 26-59</th>
<th>Age 60-85</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) /na ʃgəz/</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>81.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) /na ʒəz/</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>18.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) /gəbs/</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>76.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) /ʒəbs/</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) /gəzzar/</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) /ʒəzzar/</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher has summarized the overall scores of the three words in percentage in correlation with age, and it highlights the use of the sound [3] by younger speakers, the first category, especially with the word [d3azzar]. As table 2 shows, 22 persons (aged between 5 to 15) out of 30 tend to replace the sound [g] with [3]. Hence, this result confirms the hypothesis that education, contributes to language variation in the Nedromi dialect, since it reinforces change among the new generation from old and incorrect variants to standard forms. However, it is worth noting that, though the three first categories are educated people, the use of [g] remains less widespread than the use of [g]. In an attempt to reflect upon this variation in the speaker’s age, we have come up with the following scores:

Table 4. The total number of occurrences (90) of the variants [3] and [g] with percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 5-15</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Age 16-25</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Age 26-59</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Age 60-85</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[3]</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51,11%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23,33%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18,88%</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48,88%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>76,66%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>81,11%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tables above reveal that younger speakers realize the variant [3] more than [g]. Forty-six occurrences of the variant [3], which means 51,11% vs. 44 of the variant [g], which is 48,88%. A look at the scores confirms again, that young people are more likely to shift to the MSA form /d3/ → [3], which may be due to education, probably because they have realized the misuse of the variant [g] and corrected it. However, we have found that the three other categories, especially the middle-aged speakers, preserve the use of the variant [g] though they are educated. Moreover, one may notice in these scores, the high percentage of the use of the variant [g] by old speakers, 81 vs. 08, 88% of the use of the variant [3]. These results are highlighted in the following graph:

*Figure 2. Scores of the variants [3] and [g]*
**Nedromi Arabic Morphological Variables**

**The Object Pronoun Suffixes {a}, {ɔm} vs. {ha}, {hɔm}**

While the CA masculine possessive suffix {-hu} maintains the [h] sound in many dialects, particularly rural ones, as in [ʌ̞arbah] (For CA /ʌ̞arabahu/, ‘He hit him’. [h] has been reduced in other varieties, particularly in urban ones, as in [ʌ̞arbu]. The feminine singular pronoun {-ha} (also represented {-hɑa}) is preserved with its glottal fricative [h] in most Arabic colloquial varieties (though the lay vowel [aɑ] is shortened to [a]). But in NA and some other dialects in the area (as well as in some countries like Syria and Lebanon), [h] has been reduced, and [ʌ̞rabha] is realized [ʌ̞arba]. The same phenomenon occurs with the plural suffix pronoun {hum} and Nedromi Arabic speakers usually say [ʌ̞arb*um] not only with [h] drop but also a vowel reduction /u/ → [ə].

It is worth noting that these object pronouns occur not only with verbs, but also with nouns having, in this case, the function of possession as in /bejtahaa/ and /bejtahum/ (her house or space), realized in NA [bita] and [bitum]. We may deduce that this characteristic, which means the drop of the glottal [h], is specific to the tribe of Trara (Nedroma, Ghazaouet, and some other areas like Honaine, Tlemcen, Algeria). However, Nedromi speakers tend to restitute the glottal fricative, which means using the glottal [h]. These linguistic variations are clarified in the table5:

In trying to reflect upon this variation in the speaker’s age, we have come up with the following scores:

**Table 5. The total number of occurrences of the object pronoun suffixes {a}, {ɔm} vs. {ha}, {hɔm}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age 5-15</th>
<th>Age 16-25</th>
<th>Age 26-59</th>
<th>Age 60-85</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/h/→Ø</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{a}, {ɔm}</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/→[h]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{ha},{hɔm}</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6. Percentages of the object pronoun suffixes {a}, {ɔm} vs. {ha}, {hɔm}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age 5-15</th>
<th>Age 16-25</th>
<th>Age 26-59</th>
<th>Age 60-85</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/h/→Ø</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{a}, {ɔm}</td>
<td>53,33%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>43,33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/→[h]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{ha},{hɔm}</td>
<td>46,66%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>56,66%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results are put in the following figure where we explain the use of these morphemes {a}, {ɔm} vs. {ha}, {hɔm} in correlation with age.
The scores above clearly indicate that the local affixes {a}, {əm} occur noticeably more than the other forms {ha}, {həm}, except for middle-aged speakers who tend to use the glottal [h] more. The results of the occurrences of {a}, {əm} vs. {ha}, {həm} in correlation with age show that young speakers are more likely to use the glottal [h] than elders, and this can be because youngsters are more likely to use the standard form than elders, as the glottal [h] stands in MSA.

**Nedromi Arabic Lexical Variables**

**The Use of the CA Pronoun /ʔanta/ ‘you’ as [nta],[ntina]:**

In this investigation, the researcher is also interested in the use of a feature worthy of attention, which is the lexical item [ntina] ‘you’, a singular personal pronoun from MSA pronoun /ʔanta/ which is used to address a male and /ʔanti/ to address a female. Most Algerian Arabic varieties, are characterized by making gender distinction: [nta] and [ntaja] vs. [nti] and [ntija]. However, the data collected unveil that Nedromi speakers use the pronoun [ntina] to address both a man and a woman. The researcher has found that this item [ntina] is avoided by some Nedomí speakers when addressing a man, as it is regarded as a stigmatized feature, especially when speaking to non-Nedromi speakers. During the data analysis, precisely the informants’ answers about the use of the pronoun [ntina] and [nta] when addressing a man, the researcher obtained the following results:

**Table 7. Scores of the use of the personal pronouns [ntina] and [nta] when addressing a man**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age 5-15</th>
<th>Age 16-25</th>
<th>Age 26-59</th>
<th>Age 60-85</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ntina]</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[nta]</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above tables, we may quickly realize that Nedromi speakers, especially middle age speakers, are more aware that the pronoun [ntina] is stigmatized when addressing a man. Therefore
they avoid it as they feel is an item used to address a woman. The results are shown in the following figure, where we explain the use of these pronouns about the age of the speaker:

*Figure 4. Scores of the personal pronouns [ntina] and [nta] when addressing a man.*

Nedromi speakers avoid this stigmatized feature not only when speaking to non-Nedromi people, but also with family or in friends. The results show that some Nedromi linguistic items lose, which can be explained through the degree of stigmatization of the linguistic item and the speakers’ attitudes.

**Discussion**

Our aim behind such a study is to shed light on some of the reasons and motivations behind language variation in the speech behaviour of Nedromi speakers. By means of the use of certain techniques, we have been able to show the main reasons why Nedromi speakers tend to change some of the linguistic features in their speech. It should be mentioned that members of the same speech community show different linguistic behaviour, and even members of the same family do not speak or interact in the same way. The point that we want to raise here is that language is determined by its speakers as a relation to social variables.

Language is a heterogeneous system of communication; variation affects all languages as members of any society are different in terms of social variables such as age, gender and the level of education. Languages are also affected by change and this may be due to various extra linguistic factors which can be political, social and economic. Our investigations have proved that the speech community of Nedroma has been affected by a number of social pressures, thus promoting language variation which in turn leads to language change.

Age and the education play a significant role in linguistic variation and change. Findings in the previous analysis demonstrate the tendency of young generations towards the use of standard forms of their dialect. In addition, females stick more to the local forms than males. Although women are usually inclined to preserve the characteristics of their dialects, younger females in this community shift from the old features, to the standard ones.
It is noticed in all languages that not all generations speak alike. The young generations tend to make their speech distinct from the other generations with the aim of avoiding the traditional forms, whereas the elders are characterized by stability in their language use. So from these results, we can say that the speech of men and the youth in the speech community of Nedroma is more convergent than that of women and elders.

Through our analysis, we have come up with the result that confirms the hypothesis that education contributes language variation in Nedroma dialect, since it reinforces change among the new generation from old and incorrect variants to standard form.

Conclusion
Throughout this current investigation, there was an attempt to examine the social implication of education on the speaker’s linguistic behavior. It aims at explaining the speaker’s intention behind the use of specific linguistic features. The research came up with the outcome that, Nedroma linguistic medium changes due to personal motives in addition to psychological matters, and this phenomenon is generally defined as the speakers’ reaction or feeling toward language, which can be their language variety or other languages.

Our main fieldwork concern in this paper has been primarily to focalize on the reasons that condition and regulate the youth’s linguistic behavior, who tend to avoid some Nedromi linguistic features, in particular, the emphatic consonant [t]. Although (ćł): [t] is a characteristic feature of Nedromi speech, our observation has shown that most Nedromi citizens, especially youth, say that [ćł] is usually used in words having /ć/, particularly in initial and final positions. It is worth noting that education makes people more conscious of the fact and tries to avoid the devoicing of [ćł]. Nedromi speakers also tend to change other linguistic characteristics: (d3): [g], and the use of the glottal [h] when showing possession.

The findings reveal that, there is a loss of some of the Nedromi linguistic characteristics, most likely because of the negative attitudes towards these variants. Nedromi speakers become more aware of the misuse of some of the variants and try to correct them; hence the impact of education can be seen on language change in Nedromi Arabic.

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References


Narratives of Bilingual Parents on the Real-Life Use of English Language: Materials for English Language Teaching Curriculum

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Abstract
This study aimed to absorb the narratives from the parents on the using of the English Language in terms of utilizing their stories in the different levels of curriculum development, such as teaching activities and strategies. The study analyzed the narratives on their diverse experiences with the English Language and how these stories can contribute to the development of the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum. This study was exploratory research that used narratives of bilingual parents from Zamboanga City, Philippines, as the foundation for real-life application of the English language. Forty (40) bilingual parents, who have children as learners of the English Language, were interviewed extensively to navigate their experiences in their real professional lives to extract important stories where the use of the English Language was important for many purposes. Results revealed that the narratives of the bilingual parents, which included real-life examples of using the English Language, can contribute to a better curriculum design for ELT, relevant and timely production of learning materials, and better training programs for teachers on activities and teaching strategies. These narratives are collaborative materials for the schools to consider in designing the English Language Teaching Curriculum. The real-life applications of the English language increase the authenticity and practical value of specific ELT strategies and other teaching-learning styles.

Keywords: bilingual parents, real-life, curriculum, English Language Teaching, language narratives

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Introduction

The narratives of bilingual parents can significantly contribute to developing the English Language Teaching curriculum (ELT). In curriculum development and consultations, educational institutions extensively prioritize the perspectives of professionals on language tactics and approaches for teaching the English language. In terms of incorporating these stories into the micro-level curriculum development, however, there is a deficiency in absorbing the narratives of the parents on English language usage.

The parents have a sensitive say about which language their child should learn from pre-school to fluency levels. English is remarkable because it is a linguistic, functional, and cultural adaptability form of communication appropriated by distinct characteristics in particular communication settings (Sifakis, 2019). Given that parents and children immerse in a multilingual environment, they must decide whether to emphasize both languages equally and abandon the first language in favor of the language that will be most valuable in the future careers of their children (Jordan, 2017; MacSwan, 2017). Indeed, language is cognitively unique and distinct, considering all ordinarily developing children acquire the language of their language system naturally and without instruction, modified by the situations they received as an accidental consequence of different experience espoused by MacSwan (2017).

Learning strategies and language proficiency are affected by a variety of learner characteristics, including attitudes, beliefs, cultural differences, field of study, gender, language proficiency level, studying style, and length of time spent learning the language (Gunn, 2019; Kim, & Bae, 2020; MacSwan 2017). Additionally, numerous factors, including teacher performance, teaching materials, teaching approaches, and more, will undoubtedly lessen the likelihood that the proposed treatment will attain the intermediate impact (MacSwan 2017).

Many private and public schools in the Philippines prefer English as their language; in fact, many have an ‘English only’ policy. Many parents stop speaking their native language out of a sense of community obligation. Because they feel compelled to talk only specific languages, these parents miss out on raising bilingual or multilingual children.

Indirectly, parental engagement in encouraging English as a second language study is low (Werker, 2008; Sifakis, 2019). There is limited research on how the provisions increase, build up or fail as people process their English language learning in preparation for their economic condition through education (Berzak, 2016; Gunn, 2019). Consequently, this is where the research can be valuable, as it tries to utilize the nature and narrative of bilingual parents to contribute to developing an effective English Language Teaching program.

As the premise of this exploratory research, bilingual parents from Zamboanga City in the Philippines, who had children enrolled in the English language curriculum were interviewed about their stories and narratives relevant to English language competencies, teaching strategies, and the learning experiences of their students. It was significant to the ELT curriculum to sustain the needs for development, innovation, curriculum rebranding, and assessment. This study provided narratives that evaluate the current state of ELT and determine potential integration into the curriculum.
The study answered the following research questions: 1) How important is the English language to the learners? 2) Why is it necessary to learn the English language? 3) What specific English language competencies are essential for the learners? 4) In what process should school teach the English language? 5) What circumstances the English language was crucial for learners? 6) What contributions do the bilingual parents and their narratives have in developing the ELT curriculum?

Parents have a high frequency of contact with their children (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2006), so even if the child commits mistakes in using the English Language, it is already a big step towards learning the subject (Clark, 1982). The more the parents encourage their children to show and practice the language, the child is about to get better and become reliable in the rules of the language (Feldman, 2010).

Parents have a straightforward objective (Shin, 2009) to master the English Language as they know that there are times for difficulty and sacrifice to earn the ideals of a valid English Language speaker (Tienda, 2008). The only thing available for the learners is to consider going beyond the pain and discomfort, and this is to persevere because the idea of learning it now is because you will use it in the future and for their global perspective (Shin, 2007).

The following sections provide an in-depth study of the topic by reviewing the literature and previous studies on the ELT curriculum. In addition, the objectives and questions were the basis for the methods, including the interview guide, research procedures, and narrative analysis. Results used thematic analysis that studies the narratives and indicated the relevant themes. Discussion summarized the results and its essential aspects on how bilingual parents and their descriptions contribute to the ELT curriculum. Nevertheless, the study followed the systematic process to provide the interview narratives of the bilingual parents and their contributions to the integration of the ELT curriculum.

Literature Review
The curriculum mindset knows that the English Language will be essential for the future of the learners (Kelly, 2018). Many educational institutions agree that the English Language is vital in future careers as it becomes the measurement of success or increasing scores in professional examinations and professional undertakings, considering language expertise through language acquisition (Bekerman, 2009; Kelly, 2018; MacSwan, 2017). There is a specific purpose to targeting parents as they are essential to these language subjects despite their non-English-oriented specialization. Their opinions and narratives are crucial in developing a curriculum because they relate to their much exposure to experiencing the importance of the language in real life (Slavin, 2005; Kelly, 2018).

The cognitive basis of transfer is related to the multilingual parents and language learning system that includes both sharing and separate linguistic knowledge (MacSwan, 2017). English language education has extensively explored different learning strategies, and the methods of measuring the lists or classifications of learning strategies have grown increasingly splintered and standardized (Kim, & Bae, 2020; Sifakis, 2019).
Cognitive techniques for improving learning processes differ from metacognitive strategies for organizing and evaluating learning and socio-emotional strategies for influencing social and affective learning (Kim & Bae, 2020; Sifakis, 2019). In web browsing, learners use various metacognitive techniques such as organizing, planning, and self-monitoring, as well as reading methods such as scanning, skimming, comprehending subjects, and drawing conclusions (Bae, & Kim, 2018; Gunn, 2019).

In Philippine schools, English subjects primarily influence the kind of disposition and connection that a parent has in prioritizing the subject, communicative skills, and literature like standard English grammar (Daguay-James, & Bulusan, 2020). Many teachers of English Grammar consider this a concern because students reject the idea of learning it because they do not realize its value in their future lives, as showed that two-thirds of the students say that they do not like studying English (Yazan, 2019). Language anxiety is a psychological distress that widely impacts the ability of students to learn and develop literary skills (Cabansag, 2020).

Parents connect to the situation of their children in school because they have their narrative to contribute to developing strategies in ELT (Cabansag, 2020; Daguay-James, & Bulusan, 2020). Many parents know that a learner can use his confidence in learning the English Language. Parents have a high frequency of contact with their children (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2006), so even if the child commits mistakes in using the English language, it is already a big step towards learning the subject (Clark, 1982; Slavin, 2005; Cabansag, 2020). The more the parents encourage their children to show and practice the language, the child is about to get better and become reliable in the rules of the language (Feldman, 2010).

Parents know there are times for difficulty and sacrifice to earn the ideals of a valid English Language speaker (Shin, 2009; Tienda, 2008). The learners have to consider going beyond the language anxiety and persevere because learners will use this in the future as well as for their global perspective (Daguay-James, & Bulusan, 2020; Shin, 2007).

**Methods**

The main purpose of this study was to determine the narratives of bilingual parents regarding the use of the English language. This study used a qualitative design as the appropriate scheme for uncovering deeper extraction of experience and descriptions. The research used the exploratory interview to elicit deeper information from the study participants having entrenched experiences on using the English language in their real lives. Narrative data are the foundation of theoretical and developmental studies. Through this method, there would be enough written narratives about how bilingual parents perceive the English language and integral aspects of the education and learning of their children. Exploratory research is the preliminary research that serves as the foundation for more conclusive research (Saunders, 2012; Singh, 2007).

**Participants**

The study used purposive sampling, which included 40 parents whose children are studying in public and private education schools. These parents use English in business transactions, economic or livelihood activities, and other communication means for specific purposes (Rahman, 2015). They are classified to represent the samples of the parents who are prevalently communicating the
English Language in their economic and professional activities. They have the sample size of those parents who are working in government offices (10 participants), private companies (10 participants), self-employed (10 participants), and Overseas Filipino Workers (10 participants), as stipulated in the Philippine Statistics Office (PSA, 2012) Philippine Standard Occupational Office.

Instrument
The participants of this study underwent interviews to elicit essential themes and emerging ideas about the use of the English language in real lives. The survey by Rahman (2015) and Hutchinson & Waters (1987) was the basis for the interview guide questions used in this study. The following developed interview guide questions on the concept of English for Occupational Purpose: a. What is the importance of Learning the English Language? b. Why require the students to learn the English Language? c. What are the specific English language competencies essential for children, d. What are the factors to be considered by the schools in teaching the English Language? e. In what specific situations where the English Language is crucial? f. What are the contributions of the real-life narratives of bilingual parents in using the English Language for the English Language Teaching Curriculum? English language and educational curriculum experts validated the research interviews used in this study.

Research Procedures
The researcher secured permission from the school heads to select the 40 participants for the interview. All participants signed a consent form should they agree to participate in this research. Respondents were given clear instructions before the conduct of the interview. Upon the authority and agreement, the researcher set a schedule for their interview. The interview had 100% participation. The research analyzed the narrative data through coded responses from interviewees and the themes based on the research objectives and emerging issues. Significant responses emphasized the relevance of the data to the research objectives. Thematic analysis is a powerful analytical method for qualitative research as it is a flexible qualitative data analysis method taking a versatile direction of inductive or deductive information extraction (Kiger and Varpio, 2020).

Results
Question 1: How important is the English language to the learners?
According to ten parents, professionals should know the themes related to the English language because of the relevance of English communication to all walks of life and all levels of the organization. They must learn the language at the basics to communicate and express themselves. The importance ranges from basic communication requirements to anyone they meet, their professional use, and the higher or elevated position in their respective careers.
"As a parent, I am going to prepare my child for the future, and it should start now in school. It is because English communication encompasses many situations in our daily lives, whether to career advancement or to the basic communication we do through letters or extending our ideas in an organization or in a group for a very important purpose. English is all over around us as manifested in writing notes, letters, doing presentations, and other seemingly universal communication activities."
Question 2: Why is it necessary to learn the English language?

Seven out of ten parents will require their students to study English and prioritize learning the language. Their reasons include its necessity in workplaces, its value in comprehension, its attractive skill for superiors and employers, and its importance to business transactions. The parent-respondents know that children might have other particular fortes or abilities. However, they believe that it is necessary to make them learn the English language in the early years because it will prepare them for the required cases. All the characters in the society, like workplaces and many different situations, will ask about its usage.

"For instance, you are going to be asked to explain a very important concept in your work or you are being asked to expound on a very important project, if you are good in the English Language, you can make it easier for these people to understand because in the aspect of communication, you are able to fulfill their expectations in the level of clear explanation…"

Question 3: What specific English language competencies are essential for the learners?

Basic Communication Skills for Specific Purpose

Eight parents believe that children in their English Language classes must expose learners to communication practices that use the language for a specific purpose in different events and types of people. The respondents revealed that based on their experience, children should know how to respond to situations, and appropriate English Language delivery should be framed into their communication skills so that it will become second nature. Most schools also believe that children should be English communicators for many purposes.

"As we know, we are brought in different events, and we meet many kinds of people. If we use the English language properly starting from their training when they are young, it will be a great skill for them to bring in for their life later on. Schools can capitalize on this idea where kids can improve communication with different events and people."

Question 4: In what process should school teach the English language?

Career Competitiveness Competency

Eight out of ten parents believed their children should learn English. The bilingual parents also think that learners have to be linguistically competent for them to be competitive in their career or in any situations they are in where the English Language will be of use, like acing an interview or expressing breakthrough ideas. According to the respondents, learners can understand situations and express their ideas with clarity if they have a command of the English language. These qualities are essential when building careers with a superior who will watch the moves or to clients whom learners can persuade through a clear presentation of ideas in the English Language. Schools can use these justifications to include skill sets in explaining and persuading in English.

"In almost every job, if you speak English with mastery, you are one of the top choices in an interview or if you are convincing a client. This is because if you speak the English Language with the command, it means you can be a good explainer, and your ideas will be understood. Usually, when you present an idea, they will listen (your boss or your client if you are a businessman) if you have the command of the English Language. The ability to
explain and the ability to convince are two skills the schools can focus on in teaching English in a bilingual environment."

**Language Self-Sufficiency**

Seven out of ten parents agree that educated individuals venturing into the future and professional world would have an excellent mental disposition and confidence if they know the English language very well. Learners exposed to a new environment can navigate their priorities and develop their communication, linguistics, and writing skills. At the very least, the person can navigate the universal communication medium to make them at ease in terms of socializing and interacting on both the professional and personal levels.

"I was assigned to the marketing department and we usually have presentations. These types of situations will make you feel pressured and tensed because you will be communicating with people with you in front. But in this case, it is like knowing first who are the people in front and from the new place I am assigned in. So I tried to speak to them first in the marketing jargons and in the English language because we are all in the profession where presentations are done in English. I get to jive initially and progressed to becoming confident and comfortable with them because I can express my ideas and thoughts with them using the English language comfortably."

**Question 5: What circumstances the English language was crucial for learners?**

**Language Comprehension-Based Decisions**

Nine out of ten parents believe that there are important decisions to be made using the English Language in situations where the individual is going to sign contracts or having to understand concepts and texts in their everyday living. Parents relate to this by extracting their own experience when making important decisions on legal matters and career choices. They believed schools should look into this angle of the importance of comprehending English language texts and use this in their school activities.

"Because I have been to career choices and legal situations, I believe the ability to comprehend documents and other English Language texts will make our decisions correctly or at least with lesser risks. Our children, who would be able to learn the English Language is at an upper hand when they can comprehend text in the English Language. Schools can use legal documents or any basic texts that will allow children to learn comprehension or enhance it."

**Technical or Jargon-Based Conversation**

Six respondents believe there are technicalities in many conversations where professional meetings or situations occur, especially if individuals are on a specific and specialized gathering. People at this particular gathering may be in a confined language based on their profession or likes or similar orientations like membership to a particular type of organization like doing advocacies. Suppose one is new or invited to these types of gatherings. In that case, one maybe is in a better situation if one knows the English Language because the person can convert vocabulary and technical discussions to simple terms. One may find it hard to translate technical terms into casual conversations.
"Oh, I used to have awkward situations where I don't know how to start on anything with my colleague on another special division. I am a teacher, and the other person is an Engineer. They were discussing about the volumes of construction materials for the schools. What I did was, I asked him what these are and actually asked him the right questions for the technical explanations of the topic. I told him the layman's version of the discussion, and then both of us met halfway about the topic, and I believe it is because I know the root words and some similarities of the terms they use."

"I have noticed that technology may it be social interactions or engagements using the digital device are not in the English language. We are confronted by its technicality and what better way to understand it is by know the common language it uses, the English Language."

**Question 6:** What contributions do the bilingual parents and their narratives have in developing the ELT curriculum?

*Relevance and Timeliness of Learning Resources*

Eight parent-respondents indicated their suggestions for relevant learning materials for the resources. These materials include videos and visuals that bring the imagination to transactions like going to a bank, buying commodities, requesting assistance, and many other conversations that mirror real-life situations. They also raised the idea of being technologically savvy and able to respond to the call of times where communication happens on social media and frequently when using gadgets in many forms. Almost all technological activities and interactions with digital devices are done in English. They believe the English Language learning materials should be relevant to the time and the practices.

"Gone are the times that we just do our own things in our little city. Now the world is of many activities and there are a lot of things that we can do anytime and anywhere and in fact the time demands us to do many things. So given that, all these things in this time are eased up when you know the English Language because instructions, interactions and information are all happening using the English language. Technology and time have come to terms with the English language and we have to embrace it. The school should be able to bring their learners to the relevance of their materials to both the English language and its relevance to time…"

*In-house Activities as Simulation*

Eight out of the ten respondents believe that as learners learn to prepare for the outside world, they should be able to process them first in the halls. As the learners explore the stages of learning the grammar or the technical aspect of English Language rules, their ultimate language experience should include realities and real-life simulations. The parents believe that a child will be able to give value to the language if the child experiences the situation at least in a simulated experience, maybe in forms of dialogue, role plays, and other forms of mirroring where the actual person or character is present. These activities may include inviting a real firefighter in his suit to explain the importance of their job to the community or inviting a news reporter and narrating how he gathers his news information.
"In the past, it seems like we are so glued on learning the grammar only, and I felt like it is too boring and it is lack with the correct and actual examples. I think learners will appreciate it more if the actual situations are being simulated in the school where the kids are learning the English Language. They would find meaning to the conversations using the English Language if it is done with authentic experience with invited guests."

**Real-Life Application**

Let them write a letter to companies to inquire about their products. Let them campaign for their schools to other schools. Let them do reports about the advantages when they visit a farm. These are the examples given by nine of the ten parents to make the transition from simulation level to real-life application of their communication skills in the English language. They further believe that the base of learning is experiencing and applying the English language to real-life situations. There is an etching of knowledge when the learners can feel and do the process of using the English language.

"I cannot forget my experience in writing to a company about their product. I ask questions and English and I ask about their company profile. And yes they replied to me which was an amazing experience because it looked like they validated and appreciated my communication in English. It was a different feeling. Up to this day I feel at ease when asking questions in English and inquiring about things…"

**Human Resource Training**

It is essential that the school place teachers or instructors well equipped with the needed English language competencies like reading comprehension, sociolinguistics, and grammar. They also have the creativity to put meaningful experiences in their teachings to value the learning process while transitioning to the ladder of fluency and proficiency levels. Six respondents said it is vital that the educational institutions continuously update the training sessions in the strategies teaching the English Language and the approaches where the value of real-life situations are in the teaching.

"I am very particular with learning in schools for the English language because aside from the subject being a core subject, I know that it is a big deal to have the competence and skills in the language. So, I ask many questions to the teachers with their activities in schools, most of the time I am satisfied with the things they do in school, but in some instances, I feel that the school has to really put premium in human resource training to continuously give them the ability to apply new strategies and to equip themselves of strategies using real-life application of the English Language."

**Discussion**

**Question 1: How important is the English language to the learners?**

The bilingual parents perceived that ‘they prefer their children to learn at least fundamental English language’ to help them develop skills in communication. Basic communication requirements mainly include those skills in communication where an individual can express their ideas in their careers or professions for different purposes. That context affirms that the English language can be a valuable tool in professional life by prioritizing learning the language (Jordan, 2017).

According to Brown and Yuke (2003), speaking is the skill the students used upon most in real-life situations. It seems that this narrative is still prevalent in professional work, which focuses on
the ability of an individual to communicate effectively. In addition, English is the language for gaining career prospects and achieving the chosen life goals. As a result of the realization of the significance of oral communication skills, the increasing emphasis on strengthening the speaking skills to complete their studies and excel in fields (Rao, 2019).

**Question 2: Why is it necessary to learn the English language?**

Bilingual parents perceive learning the English language as integral to the life of students. The need to know the English Language comes along with pressure to learn competencies like framing a communication proficiently and mastering the language skills to become natural to them to become effective communicators in many situations. This assertion relates to the concept from Sander (2016) that when one wants to pursue the language, it is packaged together with pressure to learn and practice speaking it.

A similar finding was revealed based on a survey performed by the World Bank. In this investigation, 81% of businesses listed a lack of English communication skills as a significant obstacle to recruiting local graduates (Zainuddin, 2019). This finding results in a circumstance where students from English-speaking households educated overseas, attended private universities in the area, or went to private and foreign schools have such an advantage (Hoff, 2018; Zainuddin, 2019).

**Question 3: What specific English language competencies are essential for the learners?**

Responding to situations with the appropriate language, using the proper delivery, and initiating purposeful conversations are some of the specific competencies of the English Language. These competencies become essential priorities for individuals as they navigate their lives in the future when it gets high utilitarian value in their workplaces (Yazan, 2019).

In schools that do not specialize in linguistics, the institutions implement instruction in foreign languages according to a specialized curriculum and a set of manuals. Students should be able to communicate effectively in written English, comprehend written material, and to be able to articulate their opinions in written form before they can graduate from an institution of higher education (Cabansag, 2020; Hamidova & Ganiyeva, 2020). However, in terms of language application, particular abilities are emphasized more than others in the context of language instruction. The learners who demonstrate a solid verbal command of the target language are strong language learners (Meena, 2020).

**Question 4: In what process should school teach the English language?**

Both technical and career competency delivery were the foundations of English learning. If one has a command of the English Language, one will understand the situations and express one's ideas with clarity. Schools can use these justifications to include the skill sets in explaining and persuading. A proficient individual in the English Language becomes relatable and can connect in many real-life situations (Gunn, 2019).

Learners must have a firm knowledge of the types of digital English learning and the benefits of the digital learning environment to incorporate it effectively into their learning process (Kim & Bae, 2020). Due to the fast-growing academic environment, English language learners have access
to various chances to engage in learning activities of the desired availability and value (Hamidova, & Ganiyeva, 2020; Meena, 2020). Nevertheless, this atmosphere facilitates direct contact and collaborative learning among English language learners.

**Question 5: What circumstances the English language was crucial for learners?**

Mastery of the English Language is crucial in specific scenarios, like an individual is to sign contracts, understand concepts and texts on significant transactions, and many others comprehend critical contents. Since these are crucial moments, there is a need to extend the acquisition by becoming an expert in the language to succeed where it is intended (Bekerman, 2009).

Following the context-based approach, it has been a standard procedure of English for specific teaching purposes to hold lessons on-site in workplace settings wherein language learners are performing (Niño, 2018). In this setting, it is necessary to develop plans relevant to English instruction on the needs and interests of the learners. Teachers have to utilize literary materials from the specialized field for teaching and developing reading abilities in the classroom (Rahman, 2018). The theory underlying this technique is that the applicability of the English course to the student's requirements would boost their enthusiasm and, as a result, make learning more effective.

**Question 6: What contributions do the bilingual parents and their narratives have in developing the ELT curriculum?**

English is relevant and timely because the parental narratives would include vital language skills needed in an individual's natural world and career, so materials for the ELT Curriculum should consist of these narratives through their teaching activities and strategies.

The stories of the bilingual parents manifested the real-life application of the English Language. Schools have to change the teaching the English language based on the specific narrative data of bilingual parents. These palpable manifestations encourage the learners to become reliable (Feldman, 2010) to the language they are targeting to use for the future because they would know the rules of the language.

Learners have developed a set of general learning strategies used in any learning situation. According to Magno and Maxilom (2016), a study on the transfer of Japanese reading methods to English demonstrates that learners can overcome the difficulties of the English language by having some level of language competency. Teachers could be in charge of helping students learn how to transfer their strategies to other learning environments because doing so in the first language setting is difficult (Suwanarak, 2019).

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to extract valuable narratives of bilingual parents on the use of the English Language in terms of integrating their stories in the development of the English Language Teaching Curriculum, such as developing learning materials and teaching strategies. The narrative data indicated that bilingual parents believed learning English is necessary to create good career directions for their children. Schools started applying the narratives to their ELT curriculum and prioritizing redirecting their programs for the ELT. There is a more effective pathway to learning the English Language if the curriculum considers the narratives of bilingual parents on the use of the English Language.
The narratives will make the activities and strategies employed by the teachers more attuned to what they need to learn in ELT. The implication of redesigning the curriculum include a more efficient production of learning materials, giving the appropriate training programs to ELT teachers, and eventually, producing graduates that are competent in the use of the English Language in real life and their respective careers.

Recommendations
As a result of the conclusion of this study, the following are actions for the stakeholders:

1. Parent's interest in the English Language Teaching Curriculum is at an all-time high. Schools can make frequent activities that require parental participation and make them become part of the design for the curriculum through consultations. They may be able to contribute to the content and through actual materials needed for the curriculum's components.

2. The parents' narratives are rich materials for the curriculum because these are the English language experience. Curriculum designers should plot the elements for English Language Teaching using the competencies that the parents have contributed from their responses. Their actual experiences in many situations coded for competencies may have missed in mapping the curriculum.

3. Because the narratives extracted from this study may be a new benchmark for curriculum designers, it is an excellent cue to map out the needed revamp in the curriculum, particularly the weight of the simulation activities applying the English language and as well as the real-life application of the subject outside of the campus. In the same breath, because teachers will be adopting the new curriculum and navigating and applying the injected elements in the curriculum, they should be trained to deliver the activities or strategies for English language teaching.

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References


Psychological and Pedagogical Implements of Communicative Language Teaching and Total Physical Response Methods

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Abstract
The current study aims at investigating the psychological and pedagogical implements of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Total Physical Response (TPR) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). The main focus of this study is on the principles and techniques of these two teaching methods, in addition to their psychological and pedagogical implements in EFL classes. The study, which follows the descriptive-analytical method, also scrutinizes the techniques utilized showing their crucial role in transferring the teachers' role from knowledge importing to stimulators for interactive learning. The main results showed that the use of these two methods could play an active role in enhancing learners' dependency, minimizing their shyness, raising their motivation, and activating both hemispheres of the brain. Some psychological and pedagogical implements and recommendations have been stated at the end of the study.

Keywords: Authenticity, Communicative Language Teaching, Total Physical Response, pedagogical and psychological domains

Introduction
The job of teaching is not an easy one. For decades, many debates have been raised on many controversial pedagogical issues, which is more important, possessing knowledge or methods of transferring knowledge? What or how? Quantity or quality?

Frankly speaking, possessing knowledge doesn't guarantee success in transferring it to others. To convey teachers' messages, ideas or concepts, there is a need to know how to do it in a creative way that helps learners not only to acquire the material but also comprehend and internalize it so that they can transfer it to reality. Therefore, it is of paramount importance, to emphasize the fact that the more learners are exposed to authentic, genuine, innovative methods, the more excellent and distinguished ones we get.

Methods of teaching are considered one of the main pillars of the educational process. Foreign language teaching has been a challenge for researchers and teachers alike. How to teach the target language in a certain setting is the primary concern (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, teachers and learners use a plethora of teaching methods and learning strategies to facilitate the comprehension and understanding of the material addressed. Some of these methods are helpful; while others are helpless, since each teaching method may reflect different outcomes in different learning environments.

Different factors determine the utility of any of these methods. This depends on the learners' ability and motivation, teachers' linguistic and communicative competencies, in-class physical environment, and the material itself. These variables play a crucial role in identifying the efficacy of adopting any of the EFL teaching methods. The ones that are most preferred are those that emphasize student-centered modes rather than teacher-oriented ones.

Most EFL curricula have been designed to be taught communicatively to help learners use the target language naturally and smoothly in different daily life situations. To achieve this purpose, EFL learners should be placed at the heart of the educational process since they are the ones who seek knowledge, not the teacher. This necessitates that teacher talking time should be minimized, and that of the student should be maximized. This will not be achieved unless innovative, interactive and enjoyable methods are utilized in English classes.

In the EFL field, there are several teaching methods and approaches, including Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), Total Physical Response (TPR), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Natural Approach/Direct Method (DM), Bilingual Approach, English Only Policy (EOP), Computer Assisted English Learning (CALL) (Khalil & Semono-Eke, 2020).

The efficacy of any method and approach in TEF depends on various variables including the physical environment, the social context, the educational system, some teacher-related factors, such as subject mastery, educational qualifications, and experience, and some student-related factors, including their background, level and age.

Therefore; the main foci of this research target the techniques of the TPR and CLT methods by addressing the pedagogical and psychological implements incorporated into the methods
selected and highlighting the most effective steps that EFL teachers should follow to practically and effectively use both methods in EFL class.

The researchers believe that when teachers become more aware of CLT and TPR implements; this may help them identify the added value of these two well-known methods and that not only will students be motivated, enthusiastic, and engaged in classes, but teachers will also be creators, facilitators and stimulators of incentive learning rather than knowledge instructors. Therefore, the current study attempts to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the psychological implements of the CLT and TPR methods used in EFL classes?
2. What are the pedagogical implements of the CLT and TPR methods used in EFL classes?
3. How should teachers use CLT and TPR methods in their EFL classes?

**Literature Review**

**Total Physical Response**

James J. Asher, the American psychologist, developed Total Physical Response (TPR) which tackles the way children learn their first language. The TPR is a language-teaching method that rests on coordination between speech and action; it tries to teach language through corporal activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

As Asher (2007) states, TPR relates to psychology, learning theory, and pedagogy. It is associated with trace theory which is a branch of psychology. The theory assumes that memory can be more easily recalled when its connection can be traced. Mixing verbal rehearsal with actions helps recall the meaning of words by the learners. James proposes three learning hypotheses for his theory: Bio-program, Brain lateralization, and Stress (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

At the psychological level, EFL instructors concerned with teaching children should take into account the nature of their psychology to facilitate their learning and help them master the target language. Mixing spoken English with physical movements constitutes the foundation on which TPR is built. Through the theory, students can develop their listening comprehension and fluency by reducing pressure and fear on them, in a way that interests them (Asher, 1968).

Based on the psychological qualities of the learners, the young among them tend to have short attention spans of time, coupled with a lot of physical energy. In addition, they are much tied to their environment and are more interested in the physical and substantial than in the abstract (Ngo & Pham, 2018). Richards and Rodgers (2001) indicated that the basic principles that guide the TPR method are often borrowed from developmental psychology, learning theory, brain research, and humanistic pedagogy.

The TPR teaching method absorbs the role of humanistic psychology in the study of effective factors. It is assumed that teachers’ friendly interaction with students helps mitigate psychological pressure, thus creating a good learning atmosphere. The student does not have to speak unless he is fully prepared for it. Even when any student makes some speech mistakes, the teacher might overlook them, thus providing him with more freedom to avert shyness and change
students’ moods which eventually leads to improvement. In general, Students will be free to express themselves through action because anxiety is reduced. When that shyness to speak English is no more there, efficacy will be secured (Shi, 2018).

Asher (2007) thinks that learning a target language is not different from mother tongue acquisition. In learning any native language, comprehension usually precedes speaking; the child first physically responds to commands, and later verbally, stressing the need to create a comfortable learning atmosphere to reduce the affective filters which are very important in learning. According to TPR, the teacher is like the play director where initially the learner acts on what his teacher asks for.

The learners have the primary roles of listeners and performers. They listen attentively and respond physically to commands given by the teacher. Learners monitor and evaluate their progress. They are encouraged to speak when they feel ready to accept the lesson by using their selves. (Gusmuliana, 2018, p. 120)

In teaching any language, the teacher performs three types of action: take orders, be a model, and monitor activity. On the other side, the students’ actions are models’ imitators and action performers. (Ngo and Pham 2018) Four major principles influence TPR: “developmental psychology, learning theory, brain research, and humanistic pedagogy” (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p.73). Asher (2007) stressed the similarity between the process of learning the target language and mother tongue acquisition.

In learning a native language, comprehension comes before speaking and a child first responds to commands physically, and only later verbally. Gestures should be combined with listening comprehension to increase long-term retention. By silently responding to commands, learners internalize the new language. (Asher, 2007 cited in Laes, 2018, p. 182).

TPR is not the only method of teaching that has many positive effects on the process of English Language teaching and learning. The Communicative Language Teaching Approach is one of the methods that emphasize the utilization of techniques that enhance student-centered approaches through using zany activities.

**Communicative Language Teaching**

Internationally, this type of teaching and learning has been significant for past and modern learners. “Over the centuries, a large number of teaching and learning theories and strategies have been developed to meet different learners' needs, target languages, geographic regions, and students' backgrounds” (Santos, 2020, p.105). Learners' needs are varied, but the most urgent ones are those that enhance learning by doing based on the kinesthetic learning style.

Before the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching CLT, teaching methodologies, such as Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingual approaches were widely used in the field of foreign/ second language teaching and learning. However, as time passed it was realized that repetition and memorization of forms were not enough, and the
focus was shifted to advance the aptitude to use language for practical ends. Henceforth, the traditional methodologies gave way to CLT. (Noori, 2018, p. 1050)

This means that innovative methods of teaching should be selected rather than the traditional ones as they demotivate EFL learners and result in sterile teaching and learning process.

Howatt and Widdowson (2004) indicated that during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a large number of language teachers found that the traditional concepts of language learning couldn’t meet students’ needs. For example, many teachers maintain that learning social terms, and interpersonal and intercultural interactions were as important as learning grammar and vocabulary. In the 1970s, a reaction to traditional language teaching approaches started and later spread worldwide as older methods such as Audio-lingual and Situational Language Teaching became outdated. The centrality of grammar in language teaching and learning was questioned since language competence involves more than grammatical efficacy (Richards, 2006). Richards (2006) added that learning the language doesn’t necessarily make the learner fluent. According to him, the absence of fluency might be caused by: rigid formal training and the absence of strategies that encourage students to involve in communication activities which might not motivate them to take the initiative in communicating their ideas through a language that should not necessarily be correct all through. Therefore, constant practice will for sure improve students’ language. “CLT focuses on carrying out and implementing methodologies that are capable of enhancing the learner’s functional language ability through active involvement in authentic communicative” (Savignon, 2007 cited in Asassfeh, Khwaileh, Al-Shaboul, &Alshboul, 2012, p. 525).

Nunan (1991) indicated that CLT is usually labeled abroad teaching approach, rather than a teaching method within a clearly defined set of classroom practices. The main features of that approach could be summarized in the following:

1- It focuses on communication via interaction with the target language.
2- It provides reliable texts in learning situations.
3- It provides learners with chances to concentrate not only on language but also on the process itself.
4- It enhances learners’ experience which is important for classroom learning.
5- It attempts to correlate classroom language to that activity outside the classroom.

Jeyasala (2014) stressed that EFL teachers need to provide students with spaces to interact with others to enhance their abilities to use the target language. Krashen and Terrell (1983) added that when the teacher wants his students to acquire a second language, he needs to provide them with comprehensible input and natural communication chances in a psychologically non-threatening ambience.

As Richards and Rodgers (2014) report that the learning theory has not been elaborated on like CLT. Consequently, the three elements of the theory should be discussed. These; are the communicative principle that is associated with real communication, the task principle which implies that language has a function to perform a certain meaningful task, and finally,
meaningfulness which emphasizes that language has a meaning to convey to whoever reads or hears it.

In light of CLT, learners are supposed to take part in classroom activities collectively rather than individually. In such a case, the students feel more comfortable listening to their peers than depending on the teacher who is the model. On the other hand, teachers should act as facilitators and monitors, then be models for correct speech and writing, thus accountable for enabling students to produce many sentences without mistakes. This way the teacher develops a new attitude towards learners’ errors by becoming a facilitator for language learning (Richards, 2006).

Studies Related to Total Physical Response Method

Ilmi and Anwar (2022) investigated Thai students’ perception of the TPR method in teaching English vocabulary. The study, which followed the qualitative descriptive method, used a questionnaire and an interview to collect data from 30 students. The results revealed that the TPR method allowed students to study harder and easier in learning English vocabulary. In addition, the results showed that the TPR method could positively contribute to developing students’ speaking abilities and vocabulary mastery, increasing their participation in EFL classes, and creating a motivating learning atmosphere.

Nuraeni (2019) conducted a study to find out the impact of (TPR) method on young learners of English Language Teaching (ELT) at Panti Asuhan Yuma, Jakarta. The sample of the study comprised 30 students aged between five to 11 years old. The findings revealed that the vocabulary score of the participants who used the TPR method improved.

Arlette and Hounhanou (2019) explored the impact of using the (TPR) method on the improvement of EFL beginners’ vocabulary. The sample comprised 150 students and 26 EFL teachers. To achieve its objectives, class observation was adopted as a tool to gain insight into learners’ attitudes and their reactions towards English language learning. Data were collected through a questionnaire. The findings unveiled that vocabulary teaching using Physical Response made students learn easier and faster.

Alhomaidan and Alshammari (2016) examined the effect of using TPR in teaching ESP English to students at Arrass College of Technology, Saudi Arabia. In addition, the study also examined the impact of using this method on the productive and receptive abilities of the students. The study population comprised 20 freshmen who were divided into two groups; one taught through the TPR method, and the other through the translation method. The data for each group were collected via two immediate and two delayed tests. The findings revealed that the participants taught through the TPR method outperformed their counterparts and that their ability in retaining more words was significantly better than the translation method group.

Sariyati (2013) investigated the effect of TPR on enhancing primary school students learning English vocabulary efficiency. A quasi-experimental design that involved, control and experimental groups, was conducted on first graders of the Islamic elementary school in Bandung, Indonesia. The findings of the study revealed that the application of TPR has greatly affected...
participants' acquisition of English vocabulary, especially students of the experimental group whose marks in the post-test were considerably higher than those of the other group.

Forero and Muñoz (2011) examined the influence of TPR on third graders’ acquisition of vocabulary in the school of Gamma at Pereira, Columbia. The traditional teaching method, in which the teacher was the center of learning, was adopted, and students were observed in the classroom. Afterwards, another method, the Total Psychological Response, was used. The results revealed that the students taught through TPR could learn faster and easier.

Zhen (2011) conducted a study to examine whether the TPR method was effective in teaching English adjectives. The study sample consisted of 30 pupils, aged 11 who were divided into two groups: experimental and control. The former was taught through the TPR method, while the latter was taught the traditional way. The result showed that the mean score of the experimental group, which was taught through the TPR method, was much higher than that of the control one.

**Studies Related to Communicative Language Teaching**

Noori (2018) investigated the perceived challenges Afghan lecturers encountered in practicing CLT. The study also examined whether there was any significant correlation between lecturers’ use of CLT concerning challenges and demographic profiles. The study used a quantitative research approach, a survey questionnaire that was given to EFL lecturers teaching in a public university. Results of the study revealed that EFL lecturers found positive perceptions towards using CLT activities; there was evidence that there were several major CLT activities conducted in their classrooms. The results also showed that they encountered certain challenges which hindered implementing CLT effectively. More than that, an important correlation was found between students' related challenges and teachers' perceptions. However, no significant correlations were found pertaining to teachers' demographic profiles and CLT perceived challenges.

Cheng (2015) studied the impact of practicing CLT on a mixed English conversation class. The purpose of that study was to detect whether L1 was necessary for CLT classrooms and whether using it improved learners’ attitudes towards learning. The results revealed that learners were more comfortable with CLT incorporation; it also proved that using their mother tongue could reduce their anxiety when confidence in CLT classrooms is nonexistent.

Asassfeh et al. (2012) examined Jordanian EFL school learners' attitudes towards implementing Traditional Form-focused Instructions (FFI), besides communicative meaning-oriented instruction (MOI) of English. The sample of the study comprised 1525 EFL school students. The data collected were obtained using a 41-item questionnaire and were analyzed by adopting descriptive and referential statistics. The results unveiled that students' preferences associated with MOI were relatively high, whereas EFL instructions could meet learners' preferences associated with FFI which rarely satisfied learners' MOI needs. Despite practices of some MOI, the gap between students' preferences and teaching practices linked to MOI was much wider than that between students' preferences and teaching practices related to FFI. Female learners held a relatively higher preference and showed significantly higher exposure to MOI. Compared to private-school learners, those of public schools held a higher preference for and more
involvement with MOI. Low-proficiency learners reported higher preference and more practice for FFI.

Ozsevik, (2010) studied Turkish EFL teachers' understanding of teaching English, besides the difficulties and challenges they faced in implementing CLT practices in a Turkish context through using a mixed-method research design. Participants were sixty-one Turkish teachers of English teaching primary and secondary levels. The data were collected via an online questionnaire and semi-structured and informal interviews. The findings showed that Turkish EFL teachers met many difficulties in the implementation of CLT in classrooms.

Incecay and Incecay (2009) scrutinized the perceptions of 30 Turkish college students regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classes. Findings of the study revealed that countries that teach EFL, like Turkey, needed to modify their teaching methods, taking into consideration students' past educational habits. It was noted that students benefited from CLT when communicative and non-communicative activities were combined. Thus, aligning CLT with traditional teaching practices could be of help for EFL students.

Li (1998) tested teachers’ and students’ perceptions in South Korea towards implementing CLT. He found out that the teachers encountered numerous similar challenges in CLT implementation. Those challenges were of four categories: First, problems associated with teachers which were manifested in poor spoken English, insufficient coaching, misinterpretation of CLT principles, and lack of time to create genuine teaching materials. Second, difficulties associated with students were demonstrated in poor proficiency, lack of incentives, and inadequate class participation. Third, problems associated with the educational system were manifested in concentration on grammar in exams, large classes, and little assistance from teachers. Fourth, problems associated with CLT itself as demonstrated by inappropriate use of CLT in EFL settings, in addition to the absence of suitable instruments needed for evaluation.

Karavas-Doukas (1996) explored Greek teachers' attitudes towards using the communicative approach in teaching. The results showed that although the Greek English curriculum was founded on the principles of communicative language teaching, teachers demonstrated an inclination to go with the style of traditional teacher-oriented instructions. The findings of that study showed that teachers neither understood nor experienced the practical implications of CLT principles.

**Commentary on Previous Studies**

Methods of teaching were focal for many researchers in the fields of foreign language teaching and learning as seen in the studies conducted by Nuraeni (2019) and Arlette and Hounhanou(2019) who investigated the impact of the TPR method on EFL young learners’ language skills in general. Other studies, such as Sariyati (2013) and Forero and Muñoz (2011) examined the impact of using the TPR method on learners' vocabulary efficiency in English.

On the other hand, some studies were carried out in the field of TEFL on the effect of the CLT method on learning English language skills, such as Noori (2018), Incecay and Incecay
Other studies, such as Cheng (2015), Asassfeh et al. (2012), and Karavas-Doukas (1996) studied the impact of CLT on learners' attitudes towards learning English.

The current study is different from the previously mentioned ones since it addresses the psychological and pedagogical implements of CLT and TPR methods. To the researchers’ best knowledge, no studies have been conducted on the psychological and pedagogical implements of CLT and TPR methods. Consequently, the current research is an attempt to uncover these implements.

**Method**

This study, which follows the descriptive-analytical method, was conducted over the summer semester 2020/2021. The study highlights the psychological and pedagogical implements of CLT and TPR methods used in EFL classes as well as techniques of both methods by outlining, describing and analyzing the two methods in order to make EFL teachers more aware of these implements and show their crucial role in transferring the teachers' role from knowledge importing to stimulators for interactive learning.

**Research Procedures**

All techniques and principles of both methods were investigated so that the pedagogical and the psychological implements would be elicited and discussed afterwards. These principles and techniques were categorized into two categories, pedagogical implements, and psychological ones.

**Results and Discussion**

**Question One:** What are the psychological implements of the CLT and TPR methods used in EFL classes?

Having investigated the principles, guidelines, and theoretical background of the CLT and TPR methods in the EFL context, the psychological implements of both methods could be outlined as follows:

**Both Sides of the Brain are Activated**

While the left side of the brain functions and covers logic, facts, plans, science-minded, and non-fiction, the right side of the brain deals with emotions, imagination, creativity, fiction, visualization, arts, and feelings. Hence, using the TPR method meets the needs of EFL learners. Students receive commands in the target language and perform actions with their teachers. In this way, the right side of the brain is activated. After grasping the information, students can practice hands-on activities that widen their imagination and enhance their creativity because they enjoy such activities by using verbal and non-verbal language.

**Motivation**

Techniques of TPR and CLT necessitate a welcoming and relaxing environment that stimulates the EFL learners' motivation. Most activities in these two methods are practiced collaboratively by involving most of the learners' senses. The use of zany commands and humorous skits makes language learning fun and enjoyable and motivates learners to learn more and more. For instance, using the Picture Strip Story technique in CLT, all learners become alert and motivated to learn whether their predictions are right or wrong. The information gap technique...
motivates learners to negotiate to mean and communicate with peers interactively because what student A has, student B doesn't have. So, they are forced to interact with each other so that both will get the whole story. Such a result agrees with that of (Asasfeh et al., 2012) and Cheng (2015) who pointed out that learners were comfortable with the incorporation of CLT in class and that the use of their mother tongue could reduce learners' anxiety when they are not confident in CLT classroom.

**Self-confidence**

Students are not requested to speak until they are ready for it. This creates a “safe zone” that greatly reduces inhibitions and stress. In the communicative method, learners are asked how they feel about the material delivered to encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings. In this way, they feel that they have something to share with others which maximizes self-confidence. These two methods highlight the fact that EFL teachers are facilitators. Teachers are no more the ones who know everything while students are empty vessels to be filled with teachers' knowledge. Learners have ideas, feelings, and thoughts to share with others through direct communication with peers and teachers.

**Shyness**

There are two types of learners, introverts and extroverts. As no one is called upon individually in these two methods, introverted students are encouraged to actively participate in such a stress-free environment. For example, when errors are committed by learners, teachers correct these mistakes unobtrusively. In this case, shyness is reduced and gradually demolished. In the communicative method, errors are tolerated and correction is carried out wisely since it believes that making errors initially is a sign of learning and progress. Working on the fine details that may confuse students and make them withdraw from the scene, should be postponed till learners become more confident in their linguistic and communicative competencies. Both methods strengthen self-confidence and reduce shyness to a minimum. Such a result is in harmony with that of Shi (2018) who indicated that students generally feel free to express themselves through action, indicating that when students overcome shyness of speaking in English and are in a good mood, the efficacy of learning will be improved.

**Long-term Memory**

Old-fashioned methods of teaching enhance memorization and rote learning. In this way, information is stored by learners in the short-term memory and is forgotten in a short period which cannot be retrieved easily. However, TPR and CLT methods target long-term memory as they drastically change learners' roles from passive to active ones. When they learn by doing, the retention of information lasts for a longer period and when the information is in demand, it will be retrieved easily as it is associated with a practical and authentic experience that has been accomplished in a relaxing atmosphere. Such a result is in line with that of Alhomaidan and Alshammari (2016), who indicted the positive impact of TPR in retaining more words compared to other methods used in EFL class.
Sense of Achievement

These two methods offer EFL learners a plethora of techniques that enhance their sense of achievement. Picture Strip Story, information gap, problem-solving, role-playing, and pairings are some of the techniques of these two methods. Therefore, students are given good chances to practice the language interactively in real-life situations. The more learners are actively involved in the process, the better achievers they will be. They will be active players on the ground which helps a lot in reducing the number of demotivated ones. Such findings agree with that of Forero and Muñoz (2011), who pointed out that the TPR could help EFL students learn faster and easier in a motivating atmosphere.

Question Two: What are the pedagogical implements of the CLT and TPR methods?

Having investigated the principles, guidelines, and theoretical background of the CLT and TPR methods, the researchers could outline the pedagogical implements of both methods in the EFL context as follows:

Student-Oriented

Before the emergence of TPR and CLT, most English language teaching methods considered teachers the center of teaching and learning processes. Teachers were considered the main source of knowledge who knows everything. They initiate and monitor the tasks and keep talking most of the time during the lesson while students are passive and have to memorize every single item to pass exams. TPR and CLT methods drastically changed this view by putting EFL learners at the heart of the process of teaching and learning. Learners can play games, solve problems, play roles, and predict and perform actions either in pairs or groups. Hence, student talking time is maximized and that of teachers is minimized. The techniques of these two methods make the whole process student-centered. Teachers are no more the senders and the active ones since most of the tasks are performed by learners through negotiation, communication, interaction, and active engagement during the lesson. Thus, teachers become a guide on a side rather than the siege on the stage.

English Skills

The two methods sharpen students’ speaking and listening skills and then reading and writing. The imperative as a powerful linguistic device was used by teachers to direct students' behavior. To be able to perform the right actions, they need to observe and listen attentively. Hence, the EFL learners' listening skill is significantly developed as a pre-requisite for any right response. After mastering some oral commands, learners start to read and write. Finally, students become more confident in their language and can expand activities that may include pairing, grouping, role-playing, skits, and games. For example, the CLT method emphasizes the suprasentential level by asking students to unscramble sentences to form a well-developed paragraph putting weight on coherence and unity. Such results agree with that of Ilmiand Anwar (2022) and Incceay and Incceay (2009) who indicated that the TPR and CLT could positively contribute to developing students’ language abilities, increasing their participation in EFL classes, and creating a motivating learning atmosphere.

Learning Styles
Literature shows different types of learners. The most well-known ones are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Having a look at the techniques used in TPR and CLT methods; one would conclude that they consider all these types of learners. For example, students need to look at a picture to speak and predict, to listen attentively to commands before they perform actions. Therefore, all senses are taken into account to accomplish any task. Indeed, all these authentic and real-life tasks lead to mastery learning. Both methods highlight meaning over form and stress vocabulary acquisition. From the first day of instruction, students use the target language communicatively. Such results are in line with that of Nuraeni (2019) and Arlette and Hounhanou (2019), who indicated the positive effect of using the TPR method on students' vocabulary acquisition, as the TPR method makes students learn faster and easier in a stress-free environment.

**Collaborative Learning**

Learners listen and individually or collectively perform some actions responding to their teachers' commands. In the advanced stages of the lesson, EFL learners play their teachers' role by giving commands to teachers and peers (Role-reversal). Moreover, the communicative method significantly enhances collaborative learning by using varied techniques such as role-playing, grouping, pairing, and storytelling. By using the Picture Strip Story technique, teachers create situations that foster communication and active engagement with others. Learners negotiate meaning by asking peers about the content of the next picture.

**Constructivism**

Teachers in both methods start from students' background knowledge. Then they accumulate knowledge during the process of teaching and learning. Using the Action Sequence technique in TPR, teachers start with simple commands, as they progress in the lesson, they expand these commands to include other more complicated ones with more difficult structures. The communicative method also initiates activities and tasks with simple forms before they move to more difficult ones.

**Authenticity**

Most activities and tasks used in both methods are authentic. In the communicative approach, materials are used to teach the four language skills and target native speakers' real life. For example, a reading text is taken from an American magazine with no simplification since the material is taken as it is. TPR also adopts tasks and activities that are frequently used by native speakers in real situations.

**Question Three:** How should teachers use TPR and CLT methods in their EFL classes?

The researchers believe that knowing how to use EFL methods is much more important than knowing what these methods emphasize. In the TPR method, teachers are advised to follow these guidelines:

- Using verbal and non-verbal language, the teacher should say and act and students imitate him.
- Students are required to repeat the action more than once.
- Then, the teacher writes the word/phrase on the board.
- The teacher repeats other verbs/phrase getting back to the previous ones from time to time.
Reversal roles should be activated by asking students to play the role of the teacher. Activities are extended to cover new words, phrases, or structures.

As for the proposed activities that could be used to incorporate the psychological and pedagogical implements into EFL classes, the researchers suggest using the following:

- **Simon Says Game**: This game is one of the common activities in TPR classes. According to this game, the teacher gives commands and the students are supposed to respond physically. For example, to teach directions, the teacher commands his students saying: “Simon says turn right, Simon says go straight ahead”. Instead of being told to sit and be quiet, the students are told to “move, run and point to”, a fact that could help them to actively engage in the lesson.

- **Songs with Actions**: Songs in general are considered to be one of the common techniques used to learn the target language. Within the TPR context, the students can sing “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” which is one of the classical songs used to teach children parts of the body. The students are supposed to touch/point to their body parts. Such activity could help students reduce psychological stress, improve their amount of vocabulary, and get familiarized with items of the target language.

- **Role-Playing**: This activity could be carried out by giving students a scenario or a few pieces of target vocabulary and asking them to play the role included in that scenario.

In the CLT method, teachers should take into account the following:

- Creating a motivating atmosphere in the class to reduce stress and attract learners' attention to effectively take part in the learning process.

- Make use of the different active learning strategies and communicatively implement them.

- Raising interesting, relevant, and “daily life” topics to encourage students to take part in the class and to express their thoughts freely.

- Emphasizing meaning and fluency rather than grammatical form and accuracy.

- Promoting cooperative learning by asking students to work in pairs or small groups on a certain task. This practice could help promote self-confidence and enable learners to enhance communicative interaction in the target language.

- Avoiding overcorrection of students’ errors to encourage them to take part in classroom activities, overcome psychological stress and focus more on content and communication rather than form and grammar.

Concerning the proposed activities that could be used to incorporate the psychological and pedagogical implements in EFL classes, the researchers suggest the following:

- **Interview**: Interviews can play a key role in developing students’ fluency. The teacher can assign a topic familiar to students, and then asks them to conduct interviews with a variety of people. Such interviews allow students to practice the target language communicatively with others and make them more sociable, a fact that could help reduce psychological stress and improve their level in the target language.

- **Problem Solving**: The teacher can raise a problem, a challenging situation, or an issue and provide the students with clues to help them fully understand the context of that problem. Then, the students are asked to work individually, in pairs, or in groups, to find a suitable solution for that problem. The students, afterwards, might be asked to propose ideas,
provide reasons, and even accept or reject such proposals and reasons provided by other classmates.

- Role-Playing: It is an influential communicative activity that might be used to reinforce students' language skills by creating real-life situations in the form of conversation. Tompkins (1998) defined the role to play to be a teaching procedure that encourages students to participate in the learning process. Role-playing can help EFL learners overcome shyness and anxiety through intensive practice by creating scenarios in real-life situations. (AL-Garni and Almuhammadi, 2019).

- Picture Strip Story: This activity strengthens our students' prediction capacity, and keeps all members of the group cautious, motivated, and curious. It also encourages students to actively participate in the lesson by negotiating meaning with peers so that they can get the right answer.

- Information Gap Activities: An information gap activity occurs when learner A has information that learner B doesn't have. This means that they do need to talk to each other to find answers or get the missing information so that they can have the complete picture. For example, student A has a historical background in Jerusalem while student B has a political background in the same city. This enables the interlocutors to extend speaking practice with high motivation and enthusiasm. Information gap activities may include jigsaw listening and readings, description and drawing, job interview, split dictations, etc.

Conclusion

The current study aimed at investigating the psychological and pedagogical implements of the CLT and TPR methods in the TEFL field. The findings showed that the CLT and TPR methods are student-centered rather than teacher-oriented ones. The results indicated that the use of these two methods could play an active role in enhancing learners' dependency, minimizing their shyness, raising their motivation, and activating both hemispheres of the brain. The results also showed that many activities included in CLT and TPR, such as role-playing, grouping, pairing, debating, interviewing, jigsaw readings, and information gap address learning by doing instead of memorization and could encourage learners to analyze, apply, synthesize and evaluate in most stages of learning. The study also highlighted varied practices that can be elicited from both methods to be utilized in EFL classes to enhance active, meaningful, autonomous, collaborative, authentic, and enjoyable learning.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend using these two methods at the elementary, high school, and university levels. Teachers should also be equipped with the necessary methods of teaching tasks or activities because each has its procedures and steps to be followed to guarantee meaningful learning. Curriculum designers should consider these two methods while developing any new English Language course or syllabus for their effective role in improving the level of EFL learners and creating a learner-centered environment, which is in line with the current educational trends, especially in the field of FL teaching and learning.
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Algerian EFL Students’ Perception of the Impact of Teachers’ Gender: The Case of Tlemcen University

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Abstract
In the last three decades, the study of gender in relation to EFL research has gained greater importance. The gender-based difference has been widely studied showing the role played by the teacher as perceived by university students. A teacher’s gender is undeniably a significant factor in influencing the learning process and thus bears some impact on learners’ achievement. This study explores students’ perception of the impact of teachers’ gender in the EFL classroom at Tlemcen University in Algeria. This research bears some significance as to the achievements reached by the learners based on how they may be affected by their teachers’ gender, and thus it attempts to question their preferences and their relationship with their teachers. The main question considers the impact of teachers’ gender on Algerian EFL learners’. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to forty first-year students. The findings show that students do not mind studying in mixed-gender classes and being taught by both genders. They seem to have a more positive attitude towards the role of men in the teaching profession than their female colleagues, though female teachers outperform males in interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: Algerian EFL students, gender impact, mixed-gender classes, motivation, Student’s perceptions, teaching

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Introduction

Several variables including age, gender, personality, geographic location, socioeconomic status, cultural background, teaching strategies, and curriculum materials may influence students’ attitudes toward learning a new language. Gardner (1975) suggests that gender is one of the most significantly influential variables. Undeniably, the gender of both teachers and learners is an important factor that influences the teaching/learning process. Studies in gender-related differences concerned with language teaching recognize that gender as a working variable is dependent on the classroom environment. A safe and relaxed classroom is necessary to create a supportive learning environment for EFL learners, enhance their self-confidence and help them learn the language rapidly and successfully. Studies such as Canada and Pringle (1995), Chavez (2000), Dee (2006), Duffy, Warren, and Walsh (2001), etc., have pointed out that gender affects classrooms in various ways. For example, Williams (1993) and Gray and Leith (2004) reported that the gender of the teacher influences the learning process. One of the reasons is that male and female teachers treat girls and boys differently even if they are not always aware of doing so. Therefore, this research is guided by the overall questioning of Algerian EFL learners’ perception towards their teachers’ gender and the resulting impact on the learning process in class. The attempt is to consider the following sub-questions:

1. By whom do EFL learners prefer being taught? Women teachers or men teachers?
2. With whom do they have a better interpersonal relationships? With a lady teacher or with a male teacher?
3. The significance of this research is to show the importance of the teachers’ gender on the EFL students’ achievements. Based on our own experience, it may be hypothesized that on the whole EFL learners prefer being taught by female teachers for their sensibility and better personal relationship, though there is always a proportion of students who feel better with men teachers.

This paper will first offer an overview of the relationship between gender and EFL teaching and its impact on students’ achievements. The method section briefly describes students’ perception and influence of teachers’ gender during EFL classes. An open-ended questionnaire is designed for such a goal. The last sections include results, discussion, limitations of the study and a conclusion.

Literature Review

During the last decades, research on gender studies has increasingly gained ground. While a considerable body of literature has examined teaching theories and methods including SL/FL (Banning, 2005; Canale & Swain, 1980; Carpenter, 2006; Ellis, 1994; Nagasundram, Swanto, Soekarno & Din, 2021, Richardson, 2005; Widdowson 1978, 1979; to name a few), the investigation of the relationship between gender and education is relatively limited (Holmes, 1991; Tannen, 1996 and Sunderland, 1998, 2000). For example, Sunderland (2000) has reviewed language and gender in second and foreign language education with a special focus on gender; teachers, professional organisations and gender; new theorisations of language and gender; etc. Regarding the domain of education and under the influence of the feminist movement in the 1970s, the role of gender has become topical among researchers to determine whether the gender of the teacher and students can influence the process of language learning. Nyikos (1990) argued that there is “a popularly accepted notion that modern language study is a woman's area which, in terms
of jobs, leads to female dominance in the language teaching staff of schools” (p. 274). Studies on ESL/EFL have explored the relationship between gender and EFL teaching (e.g., Barrios Fernández & Riudavets-Barcons 2021; Pica, Berducci, Holliday, Lewis, & Newman, 1991; Young & Milanovic, 1992). These studies have shown that EFL students’ attitudes and perceptions concerning the gender of the teacher may positively or negatively influence their classroom achievements. Highlighting the importance of gender in ESL classrooms, Tannen (1996) assumed that “It is important, however, to bear in mind that gender-related patterns dovetail with all other dynamics of language behaviour: Ethnic, class, regional, and age differences all affect speaking styles, along with such influences as sexual orientation, professional training, and individual personality” (p. 341). She went on to say that “Interest in gender-related patterns of classroom discourse will enrich an understanding of the dynamics of the TESOL classroom” (p. 343).

On the other hand, the EFL teacher’s gender also affects their attitude towards their profession. Specialists have found that female teachers have more positive attitudes towards the teaching profession than males. Dee (2006) maintained that there is a causal effect between the teachers’ and students’ genders and that “the teacher acts as a gender-specific role model, regardless of what he or she says or does. [...] students are more engaged, behave more appropriately, and perform at a higher level when taught by one who shares their gender” (p. 70). Teaching has nothing to do with one's gender. Beyond the prevailing teachers’ gender stereotypes, male teachers are similarly as caring and affectionate as women. Above all, a good teacher is someone who can connect with the students and plan the lessons consequently.

Many studies like those of Canada and Pringle (1995) and Duffy, et.al. (2001) have explored the influence of gender on teaching/learning. Lawrenz (1987) found that students have preferences for opposite-gender teachers. Chavez (2000) noticed that classes taught by male teachers were more teacher-centred classrooms as they monopolised discussion. While learning, students of different genders react differently depending on the teacher’s gender. Chavez (2000) explained that, compared to their male classmates, female students are more cooperative with their teachers. He explained that they use less humour than males and are more concerned with conforming to teachers’ and teaching expectations. Consequently, teachers worked more with female students than males because girls were more willing to interact with their teachers and participate during lectures than their male classmates. Research on gender-based differences in the teaching/learning process has also provided major facts that positive attitudes between teachers and students are necessary for academic and personal enrichment for the students.

**Gender and EFL Learning and Teaching**

Researchers in second and foreign language learning assume that gender is substantially responsible for differences in language learning behaviour and resulting outputs (e.g., Freeman & McElhinny, 1996; Sadker & Sadker, 1992; Sommers & Lawrence, 1992; Swann, 1992). Gender is a significant factor in EFL language teaching/learning because adequately described in a binary manner. Markham (1988) argued that ESL learners display higher levels of comprehension with male teachers seen as more expert than female teachers. However, Chavez (2001) observed that female students react more positively to female than male teachers.
Moreover, in second language learning, variables such as age (e.g., Chavez, 2000, 2001), motivation and beliefs about language learning (e.g., Horwitz, 1987, 1988), anxiety (e.g., Young, 1994), gender (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989) have been shown to affect language learning in terms of strategic behaviour and achievement. In EFL classrooms, when teachers share students’ first language and cultural background, it may help to facilitate the language teaching/learning progression.

The ultimate goal of EFL teachers is to help students become increasingly proficient in the language. Particularly in an EFL language setting, the classroom offers the primary opportunity to learn and practice the necessary skills.

Method
As mentioned above, the present paper aims to examine the impact of teachers’ gender on EFL learning to explore students’ preferences regarding gender. To achieve such an objective a quantitative method is used. The study uses a survey which consists of an open-ended questionnaire designed to explore students’ perception and influence of teachers’ gender in the EFL classroom.

Participants
The study includes a group of 40 EFL students enrolled in the first year of the English degree in the department of English at the University of Tlemcen in Algeria during 2020/2021. The participants were selected randomly. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was difficult to fully carry out the survey.

Research instruments
The instrument used was an open-ended questionnaire containing seven questions. Out of the forty questionnaires administered to the students, only thirty-one were completed and returned. All the students were taught by male and female teachers of different subjects. The participants were asked to mention their gender and answer six questions. The questionnaire, which also includes a part for suggestions, consisted of six questions about the students themselves and their teachers. The data collection procedure was fully completed at the end of the session. Before applying the material, brief information about the study and the aims needed to be achieved were explained to the participants. The data collected from the students’ responses to the questionnaire items were computed and converted to percentages and graphs.

Results
The examination of the data obtained has revealed some interesting findings on the influence of gender in an EFL classroom; these are presented in the tables and graphs below. The first question just considers the students’ gender.

Our teaching experience in the department confirms that in general more girls choose to study languages than boys, and indeed the lists of enrolled students this academic year – and all previous years – show that female students doing English make up more than twice the number of males, approximately two-thirds females vs. one-third males. However, because of the pandemic, very few students participated in the present study with equivalent numbers of female and male
informants, 16 vs. 15, respectively, i.e., roughly a fifty-fifty proportion, which easily reveals gender differences and similarities in students’ reactions.

The second question tries to elicit whether students prefer to study in same-gender or mixed-gender classes.

![Figure 1. Students’ preference to study in same-gender or mixed-gender classes](image)

The results show that slightly more than half of the participants (52%) prefer to study in mixed-gender classes while 48% have a preference for same-gender classes. They believe that mixed-gender classes provide equal opportunities for both males and females to interact in various ways to learn English, and those same-gender classes do not reflect reality.

The third question exposes the students’ preference as to teachers’ gender, i.e., whether to be taught by female teachers, male teachers or both.

![Figure 2. Preference for the teachers’ gender](image)

The findings indicate no difference in having male or female teachers. Students do not have a preference for one gender over another. They all declare to prefer to be taught by both genders.

The fourth question tries to find out what students believe about teachers’ talent: Are male teachers better than female teachers? Or is it the other way around?
Figure 3. Students’ beliefs on who are better teachers

Though most of the students believe that both genders are good teachers, there is a slight preference for male teachers over female teachers. 52% of the participants declare that male teachers are better teachers than female ones.

Question five concerns the students’ perception of who motivates them more, female or male teachers.

Figure 4. Motivating teachers

The results indicate that students perceive that their teachers do not motivate them equally. For 62% of the participants, female teachers are more motivating than their male fellows (38%). Women in general are felt to be more supportive and motivating than male teachers. Students associate such behaviour more with mothers than with fathers.

Question six elicits students’ perception of whether teachers discriminate between students because of their gender.

Figure 5. Teachers’ gender bias towards students
Students believe that female and male teachers behave differently in class. The results reveal that female teacher (58%) are more discriminating than their male colleagues (42%). Noticeably, it is expected that women are more predisposed to show their emotions and sensitivity than males.

Question seven tries to show to whom students confide more when they have problems, female or male teachers.

![Bar chart showing 67% of students prefer female teachers, 33% prefer male teachers.](image)

*Figure 6. Students’ preference to confide in their teachers*

While, 67% of the students declare they prefer to confide in female teachers, 33% prefer to talk to male teachers. These differences between females and males are not surprising as women, in general, tend to be more emotional and sensitive. They are also considered to be more understanding and take care of others than males.

The findings indicate that students privilege studying in mixed-gender classes and do not mind being taught by men or women teachers, a fact that reflects the diversity of real life. However, it is also believed that male teachers are better teachers than female ones in certain pedagogical aspects. On the other hand, as regards the interpersonal level, students feel that female teachers are more caring and exhibit more warmth and nurturing qualities than male teachers.

**Discussion**

Regarding the first research question, the findings disclose that students wish to be taught by both genders with some specific roles attributed to each gender. On the other hand, concerning the second research question, results show that male teachers receive more positive attitudes concerning their role as teachers, while women teachers surpass males in interpersonal relationships with students.

The results bring out four major outcomes. The first significant finding is the dominance of female over male students during EFL classes. It confirms the general trend according to which language studies are “girls’ domain” (Sunderland, 1998). Moreover, as assumed by Nyikos (1990), the fact that women are more inclined to do language studies explains females’ dominance as teachers. For example, in the department where the investigation is carried out, there are more female than male EFL teachers.
The second outcome reveals that students prefer to study in mixed-gender classes and do not mind being taught by both genders. Teachers’ genders seem to have no importance when learning. The advantage of mixed-gender classes is that it reproduces life diversity and prepares students for the real world. On the other hand, they favour mixed-teaching gender because they have always been taught by both genders from their early childhood starting from primary school. It may be suggested that students seek affection and patience among female teachers and at the same time assertiveness and authority among male teachers. Additionally, when taught by both women and men, students take teachers as role models better understand how to behave with both genders that are similar and different from them positively and create good cohesion within the classroom.

The third outcome reveals a more positive attitude towards the role of men in the teaching profession than their female colleagues. However, though several studies like Centra and Gaubatz (2000), Feldman (1992), Islahi (2013), and Mullola et al. (2011) state that there are no significant differences in teaching approaches between male and female teachers, our results show that male teachers are slightly thought of as better than their female colleagues concerning their teaching capacity. Such belief is probably based on the fact that male teachers are more effective and less emotional. It seems that for university students, who are autonomous learners, at the university level the most important thing is knowledge and gender is perhaps less important than in primary and secondary schools where pupils need more attention and educational support from their teachers. The results also show that both genders are good teachers and that for the students there is a slight dominance in favour of male teachers.

The fourth outcome is related to the student-teacher relationship. Female teachers outperform males in interpersonal relationships. In addition, they are believed to better motivate the students and at the same generate gender bias between them than male teachers. On the other hand, students find it more suitable to confide in their female than male teachers. The results seem to comfort the idea that women in general are better teachers based on their experience as mothers. Students see in their female teachers a representation of an extension of the role mothers traditionally perform at home with their children. Another reason can be that female teachers are more likely to take into consideration their roles as a mother. However, some results reveal higher effectiveness on the part of male teachers. Contrariwise, teachers behave differently as far as the learners’ gender is concerned and, thus, may create a gender bias. Dee (2006) explains that:

> teachers, both men and women, treat boys and girls differently in the classroom. For example, some controversial evidence, based on classroom observations, suggests that both are likely to offer praise and remediation in response to comments by boys but mere acknowledgment to comments by girls. Some cognitive scientists suggest that teachers may subtly communicate different academic expectations of boys and girls and these biased expectations may become self-fulfilling. (p. 70)

According to Moos (1979), the relationship between students and teachers is an important dimension of class climate and ‘personal relationships within the classroom’ is among the most important dimensions of classroom atmosphere. Maslowski (2001) claims that classroom climate
is made up of the collective perceptions of students regarding the mutual relationships within the classroom in addition to the organization of the lessons and the learning tasks of the students.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictive measures imposed on the university during the crisis, the research presents some limitations. The major one was that groups of students were divided into sub-groups and that their attendance was not compulsory. This explains the restricted number of participants in this investigation. To reach a larger number was quite difficult. To carry out the research, an online questionnaire was used but the participation was not consistent. Accordingly, the survey was carried out with the sample at hand during the class. It is aimed to expand the research to a larger group in the future.

Conclusion

This study has dealt with the gender-related difference between EFL teachers. Though teachers’ role in the learning process is not merely determined by their gender, it tremendously contributes to the process. As far as gender-related teacher role is concerned, many of the findings show that EFL teachers’ gender is an important factor from the students’ point of view. On the whole, students seem to accept favourably gender diversity, though interpersonal relationships are more associated with female teachers while teaching competence is correlated with male teachers. In addition to gender as a variable, it is also important to investigate other factors affecting the teachers’ role in the learning process such as age, personality, cultural diversity, interpersonal relationships, engagement, and empathy. Because of time and space limitations, this study has not considered other factors. Yet, further research in the area is recommended. Finally, it is hoped that this study has shed some light on the effect of gender differences in EFL learning.

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References


Effectiveness of the Inquiry-Based Method in English Language Teaching of Ukrainian University Students Through Technology-Enabled Learning

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Abstract
The requirements of the time and significant changes in the educational system with emphasis on distant learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic force teachers to reconsider methods, approaches, techniques, and tools in foreign language teaching to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process. This study describes the implementation of the inquiry-based method in the process of English language acquisition by Ukrainian university students specializing in cybernetics and information technology. It aims to determine the effectiveness of inquiry-based learning in developing Ukrainian university students’ comprehension and communication skills in professional English through technology-enabled learning. The main research question is to investigate the benefits and challenges of inquiry-based learning for Ukrainian university students to ensure impactful results. The methodology presupposes activities that encourage the independent and collaborative acquisition of the material, increase learners’ intrinsic motivation, enhance communicative and digital skills, and provoke critical thinking and meaningful learning. The teacher becomes a facilitator and organizer directing students’ learning process, fostering their active thinking and interest. It contributes to their better comprehension and meaningful study. The research findings proved the undeniable benefit of the inquiry-based method for university students as it develops their curiosity, inspires deeper understanding and learning, and motivates them to make discoveries and achievements.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, English language teaching, inquiry-based method, quantitative analysis, technology-enabled learning, Ukrainian university students

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Introduction

The rapid development of the teaching trends in world education, the transition to a modular competency-based approach, the development of new forms, methods, and tools of teaching, establishing of new methodological foundations, and improving the legal framework of higher education in Ukraine all contributed to the integration of new technologies in the teaching and learning process. Learning is a highly mobile and dialectical process (Zaichenko, 2008). Therefore, the system of methods should be dynamic to reflect this mobility, considering changes in the practice of their usage.

The National Doctrine of Education Development of Ukraine outlines the basic requirements for higher education: personal orientation, the priority of universal and national values, and ensuring the quality of education based on the latest achievements in science, culture, and social practices (Kovalenko, 2003). Following the requirements and directions of the National Doctrine and taking into account new conditions of teaching and learning English due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we carried out research to evaluate the effectiveness of the inquiry-based method (IBM) in English classes with the students of cybernetics and information technology (IT) specialties.

The research aims to describe the experimental implementation of IBM combined with the communicative approach in the process of English language acquisition by Ukrainian university students in terms of technology-enabled learning. The study adopts the Oxford University Press methodology of teaching English with IBM that showed positive results in the primary and secondary students’ acquisition of the target language. The paper addressed the following research questions: 1) If using IBM can increase students’ intrinsic motivation, in what particular way does it happen? 2) What is the role of the teacher in this methodology? 3) How does students’ learning with IBM in technology-enabled learning demonstrate their deep reflection on what they have learned?

Theoretical Background

We use the term inquiry in education and daily life to seek explanations or information by asking questions. It is sometimes equated with research, investigation, or ‘search for truth’ (Harlen, 2013). The inquiry-based learning (IBL) scholars promote as pedagogy for improving science learning (Bybee, 2009; Shah, 2020).

Perry and Richardson (2001) define IBL as a process of meaningful and valuable knowledge creation from knowledge at hand by asking questions, drilling, and analyzing information. This method presupposes that learning relies on research. “The teacher as a facilitator provides guidance and support for students, getting them involved in the learning process as they play an active and participatory role” (Renau, 2016, p. 82). Other scholars specify that inquiry-based approaches are “one of many instructional approaches that use meaningful tasks such as cases, projects, and research” (Avsec & Kocijancic, 2016, p. 3). Learners come to new experiences with the ideas already formed from earlier thinking and experiences through their inquiry. Students learn something about specific content, but more importantly, they develop an understanding of similar events by linking past and new experiences (Harlen, 2013). They work in collaborative and cooperative groups to identify what else they need to learn to solve a problem and gain necessary
research skills. Moreover, students are at the center of the learning experience and take ownership of their learning. The teacher’s role in IBL is to guide students and promote thinking and curiosity (Wells, 2016).

Quite an exciting approach to IBM application we observe in many course books of Oxford University Press, such as: “Bright Ideas,” “Oxford Discover,” “Oxford Discover Futures” (Bilsborough, Bilsborough, & Casey, 2018; Kampa & Vilina, 2020; Wildman, 2020). It focuses on the “Big Question” section at the beginning of each course book unit. This approach consists of several communicative tasks (a set of preliminary questions for discussion, video watching, picture description, and filling out the Big Question Chart). The main goal of these tasks is to enhance students’ natural curiosity (to ask questions, find answers, and explore the world around them). This approach presupposes asking students the same questions at the beginning and the end of the topic, and comparing their answers at different stages of learning. In this way, there is an opportunity to see how their outlook changes, vocabulary, and knowledge increase and to conclude that every point of view has the right to exist. The teacher, in this case, may ask additional questions on the topic or inquire about controversial issues which require verification and discussion.

Thus, IBM gives an opportunity to encourage students’ initiative, stimulate a deeper understanding of the content, motivate them to build relationships between the acquired knowledge, create a sense of autonomous learning, etc. It helps students develop critical thinking and life skills crucial for global skills, including problem-solving, practical cooperation, decision-making, digital literacy, motivation, learning, and research skills (Kori, 2021; Renau, 2016; Wells, 2016).

The methodology based on inquiry-based teaching (IBT) involves the 5E model: Engage, Explore, Explain, Evaluate, and Elaborate. This model suggests a flexible learning cycle built in the ordered sequence of stages and illustrates reform-based, best teaching practices (Bybee, 2009). Later, Peters and Stout (2011) developed a new version of the model that included one more component: e-learning which has become of primary importance in the current pandemic situation.

The research results prove that most studies of IBT and IBL used primary and secondary school experiences (Korkman & Metin, 2021; Caswell & LaBrie, 2017; Gholam, 2019). However, they are still relatively uncommon for higher education institutions. Some works are devoted to IBL in science classes and different courses (Bayram et al., 2013; Fan & Ye, 2022; Kori, 2021). These studies prove that IBL is an active learning method beneficial for developing students’ inquiry skill and improving their academic performance, engagement, and motivation.

Referring to a range of examples of IBL, Spronken-Smith (2012) assumed that this approach is applied in all disciplines and stages of higher education. Considering the obtained results, we addressed our study to implementing IBM in the English language acquisition, mainly professional English, by Ukrainian university students specializing in cybernetics and IT.
Methods

We used a quantitative approach to data collection and a set of general scientific methods to facilitate data generalization. As for the research procedure, five groups of students were engaged in the study at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. We surveyed 76 students specializing in cybernetics and IT during the academic year 2021-2022. The age of the participants ranged from 17 to 18 years old. The methodology of IBL, combined with the communicative method, was implemented and tested in the English language classes. It was proved through testing and assessment of a variety of students’ activities. The applied methodology allowed us to involve many participants, obtain accurate results, and collect the data we needed in the shortest time possible.

Research Procedure

Many factors are responsible for motivational learning, where teaching methods are the most prominent ones. The pandemic year 2020 caused even more significant amendments in teaching and the methods of presenting and mastering the material. Distance learning became the reason for the quick acquisition of synchronous and asynchronous learning methods, modern tools and programs for interactive data visualization, and their application in practice during online classes. After all, every teacher realizes that without those tools, students’ attention, motivation, and activity decrease even faster. In our work with the students of cybernetics and IT specialties, we faced the necessity to adapt the existing methods, particularly interactive, to current conditions.

In IBL, students work together, compare, review, analyze and debate what they learn. For example, discussing “Futurology,” students were very motivated to discover inventions in their field of study that would become a reality in 20-30 years. They had heated debates about the opportunities of these inventions and showed enthusiasm to participate in some projects to obtain more information on the topic. As a facilitator, the teacher responded to students’ zest for knowledge and proposed to prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the issues discussed during the lesson. It is important to note that students may present their research results using interactive whiteboards via collaborative platforms Padlet, Miro, or Jamboard, which teachers and students have successfully mastered in response to technology-enabled learning. Finally, students voted for the best presentation and got the motivation to participate in such activities.

One of the benefits of IBM is the absence of incorrect answers. The teacher’s task is to create a sustainable environment for students to express themselves on the suggested topic. It is possible and quite reasonable to use one of the tools of the Zoom platform, breakout rooms, to do this task. They allow splitting students into small groups where they can easily collaborate to discuss the topic.

Learning from peers is one more key principle of the IBL. Students have to cooperate throughout the whole educational process. The effective results of such cooperation we observed when native speakers joined online discussions with students. It became possible due to the technology-enabled learning via an online invitation link. Ukrainian students, in this way, had an opportunity to discuss with their American and European guests many questions about their attitude to active usage of social media, the influence of social media on our offline life, smartphone, and Internet addiction, future technology trends, some of the best examples of cutting-
edge technology, etc. In this activity, the teacher acquires the status of a moderator and may propose to summarize the information in the form of an online Mind map with the help of the online tool Miro.

During our experimental teaching, we facilitated the activities applied in IBL, described the methodology, and created the model of those activities, presented in Figure 1:

![Figure 1. IBL Activities in Experimental Teaching](image)

The suggested model called for such areas of inquiry as engagement, acquisition, interaction, analysis, explanation, reflection, and evaluation of the discovered knowledge with IBL. As we can see, during IBL, students communicate, investigate, read, explore, make choices, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, knowledge, ideas, and experiences. Such activities encourage inquiring minds to the independent and collaborative acquisition of the material, increase learners’ intrinsic motivation, enhance communicative and digital skills, and provoke critical thinking and meaningful learning.

In our study of the effectiveness of IBT and IBL, we surveyed teachers (A) and students (B) as a form of generating data. We also applied the quantitative analysis to get accurate and objective findings.

Table 1. Sample questionnaire on inquiry-based teaching and learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Can you describe your experience in using inquiry-based teaching as positive or negative?</td>
<td>Can you describe your experience in using inquiry-based learning as positive or negative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Do you think the students achieved their aim(s)?</td>
<td>Do you think you achieved your aim(s)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Can you name any factors of inquiry-based learning you find the most/least useful?</td>
<td>Can you name any factors of inquiry-based learning you find the most/least useful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What was the most challenging in the experimental teaching?</td>
<td>What was the most challenging in inquiry-based learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Have you had any experience in inquiry-based teaching?</td>
<td>Have you had any experience in inquiry-based learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Do you have any suggestions/amendments for inquiry-based teaching?</td>
<td>Do you have any suggestions/amendments for inquiry-based learning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data obtained from the survey are rendered in tables 2-6, which demonstrate the number and percentage of the participants by reference to the questions in the questionnaire.

Table 2. Acquisition of the inquiry-based teaching/learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see, most teachers (75%) and students (84%) found the teaching/learning process with IBM rather inspiring. Only 7% of students expressed a negative attitude to IBL. The reason for this might be students’ low level of critical thinking and meaningful learning. Overall, participants’ reflections on the IBL were positive.

Table 3. Aims achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Rate of achievement</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Partly achieved</th>
<th>Not achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study shows that most respondents (75% teachers and 74% students) achieved or partly achieved (25% teachers, 21% students) their learning and teaching aims. The exception is four students (5%) who skipped most lessons and demonstrated low motivation to improve their academic achievements.

Table 4. Essential factors of the inquiry-based teaching/learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Meaningful learning of the topic</td>
<td>4 100</td>
<td>59 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The intrinsic motivation which fosters curiosity</td>
<td>3 75</td>
<td>60 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Constructive interaction</td>
<td>3 75</td>
<td>47 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Open-ended answers</td>
<td>4 100</td>
<td>41 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Personal enrichment with a better understanding of the material</td>
<td>2 50</td>
<td>52 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Students ownership of learning</td>
<td>3 75</td>
<td>61 80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey revealed that IBL considerably promoted students’ research-based curiosity (78%), enhanced their internal motivation to learn professional English (79%), and encouraged them to participate actively in constructive communication (62%), thus, developing their communicative skills, especially with foreigners. This approach helped students understand that there was no right or wrong answer (54%) in class discussions and that all responses were acceptable. This understanding enriched their knowledge with new information and vocabulary (68%). The ownership of learning is also a crucial factor for students (80%) as they have an opportunity to explore the topic with a sense of ownership over their education. That simultaneously allowed them to deepen their understanding of the material. The above factors were advantageous in learning English as they contributed to developing and improving students’ speaking, listening, and reading skills. Additionally, peer work improved cooperation and
communication; group discussions created immersion in an authentic atmosphere and thought-provoking interaction with people from different countries.

Table 5. *Essential challenges in experimental teaching/learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Issues with the Internet connection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Language barrier</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cooperation with native speakers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research results proved that 21% of students felt a language barrier, and 12% of participants had difficulties communicating with native speakers. The fear of expressing opinions and lack of experience in IBM learning might explain this.

Table 6. *Preceding experience in the inquiry-based teaching/learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes, at college or school</th>
<th>Yes, at university</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the survey, 88% of participants had no previous experience or interactions with foreigners. However, the most effective in this teaching/learning process, from our perspective, were tasks and questions that generated students’ interest, curiosity, and enthusiasm. They contributed to developing students’ critical thinking, encouraging their initiative and stimulating them to a deeper understanding of the subject and the English language itself.

Therefore, counting all positive responses from tables 2-6, we can observe effective dynamics in the use of IBL among teachers (78%) and students (72%), which proves that applying this methodology is valuable and motivational to boost students’ competencies and capabilities. It develops inquiring minds and provokes meaningful learning. Overall, 12% of students mentioned negative experiences. We can explain this by issues with the Internet connection, language barrier, and lack of speaking experience with foreigners. Therefore, the goal of the experimental study was achieved, and the research questions were disclosed by the impactful teaching/learning results.

**Discussion**

The research results showed that a new generation of students requires new ways of teaching and learning. They prefer to be fully involved in education and need self-motivation to gain knowledge. One of the main reasons for applying IBM to language acquisition is to promote the development of intrinsic motivation. It is a rather powerful type of motivation, as a person’s desire generates interest and is characterized by stability. Motivation is one of the most fundamental and studied factors that ensure learning success. It triggers any activity, whether work, communication, or cognition (Kholmakova, 2016).

Referring to the first research question of our study on increasing students’ motivation using IBM, it is essential to note the following. Numerous studies of IBL effectiveness revealed that a high level of students’ motivation depends on their natural curiosity. It is distinctive for primary and lower-secondary age groups (Panasanand & Nuangchalerm, 2010). Researchers
observed a strong motivation and a high level of engagement among secondary students (Caswell & LaBrie, 2017; Avsec & Kocijancic, 2016; Gholam, 2019). A relatively high level of motivation for learning science with IBL is also traced among university students (Bayram et al., 2013). Accordingly, the benefit of IBM for university students is undeniable as it develops their curiosity, inspires deeper understanding and learning, and motivates them to make discoveries and achievements.

The second research question was about the role of the teacher in IBL. Our findings on the issue confirmed that it had changed significantly. There is an opinion that students should construct their knowledge for themselves (Funa & Talaue, 2021), and they must be ready for self-directed learning (Melkonian, 2022). As we suggested above, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator and organizer, focusing on collaborative and communicative activities. In this way, he fosters students’ active thinking and contributes to their better comprehension and meaningful study. According to Vlassi and Karaliota (2013), the students explore, and the teacher becomes the guide in this research.

The most significant for experimental teaching was students’ reflection which became the third research question in our study. The methodology proposed in many course books of Oxford University Press and addressed to primary and secondary students proved effective when applied in English classes with university students. It contributed to their engagement in various activities that helped refine their communicative skills, activate their prior knowledge, and realize the need for self-improvement. In this respect, reflection makes students understand their personal development and growth in the learning process to evaluate their progress in achieving the learning objectives.

After considering the research questions, it is essential to note the difficulties the students encountered in the learning process. The first was related to the Internet connection during online classes. The second belonged to the language barrier, where students with a lower level of English felt ashamed to express their opinions. In this case, blogs or chats were the solutions for such students. They had more time and resources to formulate their thoughts and share them with others. And finally, cooperation with native speakers became an issue for students who were shy and uncertain about their language skills. It prevented them from active participation in the conversation. However, moderation of the learning process by the teacher, who captures the inactivity of such students and proposes a set of written questions in a chat box, often motivates them to become active participants in the class discussion and can be viewed as one of the solutions to the problem.

Conclusion

The paper met the target set in the research: to improve the teaching process in Ukrainian higher education institutions following the world’s education standards and modern students’ requirements. The study fulfilled the tasks aimed at investigating, implementing, and experimentally checking the effectiveness of IBM in the English language acquisition by Ukrainian university students specializing in cybernetics and IT. The research results allowed us to gain insight into the challenges the students and teachers faced during the online study and to
analyze their self-reflection and self-evaluation to improve the methodology used in the English language classes.

The findings of our study proved the effectiveness of the inquiry-based tasks that included exploration, investigation, discussion, evaluation, etc. These tasks allowed students to gain knowledge by working on a problem, making decisions, improving their critical thinking, developing communicative and digital skills, fostering cooperation, and promoting learners’ autonomy and independence. The application of IBM in language teaching and learning in combination with the communicative method confirmed that the effectiveness of learning increased up to 72%. Thus, the obtained results indicate that the methodology described above contributed to effective teaching and meaningful learning and ensured impactful results.

However, there is a need for further studies of IBM application in higher education institutions during different courses to gain more diverse experience and a broader scope of data to validate the reliability of the methodology. Future research could also examine the effectiveness of the IBL 5E model in learning English for Specific Purposes that would add value to the existing studies.

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An Empirical Research on Schema Theory Based Teaching of the Continuation Task for Chinese Senior High School Students

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Abstract

The continuation task, a novel type of source-based writing task which requires students to read and accomplish an unfinished source text, has gained growing popularity in English writing tests, particularly in China. This study employed schema theory in the teaching of senior high school continuation tasks and delved into its resultant effects on learners' overall writing ability, lexical richness, syntactic complexity, and semantic coherence. Theoretically, it serves as an extension of the Schema theory. Practically, it contributes to the improvement of the continuation task instruction and offers a realistic method to achieving better writing from the perspectives of linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema. This research revolves around such questions: What effects do schema theory-based Continuation task instructions have on students’ overall writing competence; lexical richness; syntactic complexity and semantic coherence? During the research, two groups of EFL students (N=110) from Chinese senior high schools participated in the trial for fourteen weeks. One group was randomly selected as Control Class where the teacher adopted traditional teaching approaches. At the same time, the other was set up as the Experimental Class guided by schema theory. The participants writing performance were evaluated through the lexical richness, syntactic complexity and semantic coherence. Sample T-test and paired T-test found statistically significant differences between the Control class and the Experimental class. These findings suggest that the schema theory-based approach, such as providing a semantic map or outlining the story to participants, was proven effective in honing the students’ overall writing capability, lexical richness, syntactic complexity, and semantic coherence. Because of the chosen research approach, its efficacy is limited concerning language and discourse.

Keywords: continuation task, lexical richness, Schema theory, semantic coherence, syntactic complexity

Introduction

Recently, source-based writing tasks is becoming increasingly popular in large-scale English assessment (De Fina, A. A., Anstendig, L. L., & De Lawter, K., 1991; Esmaeili, 2002; Shin & Ewert, 2015). In China context, the continuation task, an innovative mode of source-based writing task, which requires students to read and accomplish an unfinished source text, has been incorporated into the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), the university entrance English language test for the entire nation (Cheng & Qi, 2006), as early as 2016. Previous studies have revealed its facilitative effects on language learning. It is deemed a contributor to promoting vocabulary learning, writing fluency, writing accuracy, and divergent thinking ability (Cui, Y., Yang, L., & Wolter, B., 2019; Peng, J., Wang, C., & Lu, X., 2020; Zhang, X., Du, L., & Zhu, X. 2022). Nevertheless, the pedagogical theories related to the Continuation tasks remain unexplored. To fill the research gap, the current study investigates the impact of schema theory and the writing method used in continuation tasks.

In the 21st century, writing is regarded more cognitively demanding process based on multiple text comprehension and analysis (List & Alexander, 2017). During this process, schema supplies a significant role in collecting background knowledge, building text structure, and constructing hierarchical organization. (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). The Schema theory has provided a new perspective for the study of Continuation Task teaching, as it explores a variety of effective strategies for activating existing schema, constructing new ones, and consolidating the inherent schema from the perspectives of linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema. Theoretically, it contributes to the current set of ideas on Continuation task instruction and should be a development of the Schema theory. Practically, this study carries implications for both instructors and learners. As for the rank of teachers, this thesis offers a sound and panoramic view of the new writing task: The writing process of the continuation task instruction could also be considered a cognitive process of schema activation, schema conversion, and schema reorganization (Flower & Hayes, 1984). For students, it presents a viable solution to quality writing from the perspective of linguistic schema, content schema and formal schema. Therefore, this research revolves around such questions: What effects do schema theory-based Continuation task instructions have on students’ overall writing competence; lexical richness; syntactic complexity and semantic coherence? To sum up, the above introduction describes the research background, purpose, and significance. Following are descriptions of the literature review, research methodology, discussion, and conclusion.

Literature Review

Schema Theory

Schema is the information structure by which knowledge is represented and stored in the human brain (Cook, 2000; Dahlin, 2001; Rumelhart, 1980). Linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema are the three primary classifications of schemata from a linguistics standpoint (Al-Issa, 2006). Linguistic schema refers to how pupils currently possess their innate language knowledge, which serves as the foundation and requirement for English writing (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Content schema means the background knowledge of a discourse content stored, including familiarity with the topic, cultural knowledge, and related experience (Carrell, 1984b). Formal schema refers to the knowledge stored in humans’ minds about the form, rhetoric, and structure of different types of discourse (Li, 1998).
Numerous research has shown the efficiency of the schema theory in various facets of EFL learning and teaching. Some studies have demonstrated that schema theory has been an important factor in the development of reading instruction models and has had a significant impact on reading comprehension (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Sadoski et al., 1991; Xue, 2019). Recent studies have found that the application of the schema theory in English reading teaching enhances information processing and predictive reasoning (Yan, 2020). Others discovered that schema theory has been considered to activate learners’ listening ability (Bilokcuoğlu, 2014; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Herron et al., 1995). Farangi and Kheradmand Saadi (2017) compared the effects of two well-practiced Schema theory-oriented approaches in listening comprehension. It was demonstrated that the schema group indicated a “more remarkable improvement in listening comprehension” compared to the dynamic assessment group.

One gap in the schema theory research is the majority of research concerning the application of schema theory in reading and listening instruction. For the past few years, several empirical studies have been conducted to explore the theory in the writing area (Zhou, 2005). The influence of Schema theory on the writing of test-takers in the Continuation task has hardly been investigated. Hudson (1982) found that once the readers’ background knowledge was activated, it would complement writing competence with their language skills, which means the readers’ lack of language skills can be compensated by their background knowledge. Accordingly, schema plays a greater role than one's foreign language proficiency in understanding the text. The schema theory probably provides researchers and teachers with a writing teaching model for representing and generating knowledge. This study examines the guiding function of schemas in the continuation task. Students in senior high school should benefit greatly from the new method of instruction because it offers them a fresh perspective and a different approach to learning.

**The Continuation Task**

The Continuation task has been around for many years. It was believed to “stimulate language learning efficiently” (Wang, 2012; Wang & Wang, 2015). Specifically, this type of story-end writing task furnishes scaffolding in terms of context structure, rhetorical devices, and language production, which is likely beneficial for learners to enhance their language competence (Hyland, 2000). In 2016, it has been incorporated into the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) writing section in Zhejiang Province (one of the NMET reform pilot zone). In the evaluation part, students’ writing performance is evaluated by story development, usage of underlined expression from the source, language diversity and correctness (Zhao, 2016). In the task, test-takers need to establish a situation model for comprehension and develop the story based on the model built to ensure the coherence of the whole story (Wang & Wang, 2015). More specifically, students are supposed to complete an unfinished story with 350 words, with a total score of 25.

Several studies determined that the testing application of the Continuation task can carry a positive wash-back (Peng et al., 2020; Wang, 2021; Ye et al., 2021; Zheng, 2019). Wang (2015) illustrated that when students were offered source text in English, they tended to employ more individual words and lexical chunks from the source and fewer linguistic errors in singular/plural forms, infinitive forms and tense. Zhang (2022) has examined the Continuation task gains more on correctness and enhances the writing quality of Cambodian Chinese students.
The gap in the continuation task research is that it laid too much emphasis on exploring whether alignment occurred and how the continuation task affected students' writing performance. Until now, little attempt has been made to assess teachers’ perspectives regarding how to promote students' writing ability through a specific Continuation task teaching method. The current study aims to fill these research gaps. In the writing process of integrated reading-writing tasks, Bracewell et al. (1982) stated that discourse production requires the generation of text by language use, and comprehension involves the adherence of the language users to an already existing text, which exposes the close relationship between reading and writing. Moving from task representation to the cognition of reading and writing, Flower et al. (1990) explored reading not only for understanding the text but also provides a practical approach to help learners acquire helpful information from the source text. To these studies, the writing process requires the integration of background knowledge and involves the activation of a series of thinking processes. It coincides with the Schema theory, which shows the significance of the thinking process about activation and construction of existing knowledge. Therefore, this research will focus on the application of Schema theory to Continuation task teaching. By activating the schema that students inherently have in their minds, they can be assisted to produce new writing “schemata” to improve the quality and efficiency.

**Schema Theory-Based Approach as the Design Equation**

Writing is a complicated mental activity that grows by interaction with other people or other texts (Sari et al., 2020; Smith et al., 1987). For half a century, studies have discussed a variety of instructions to teach writing, including the Product Approach, the Process Approach, and the Genre Approach (Bijami & Raftari, 2013). In this study, we adapt Process Approach to Continuation task instruction. The Process approach is based on communication theory and cognition theory, with the cultivation of students’ ability to employ various skills during reading and cognitive activities as focuses. The teaching pattern of a typical Process Approach contains four stages, including pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing (Faraj, 2015).

The learner's comprehension of the source paragraph in the Continuation task, according to Schema theory, is a mix of the text and their prior knowledge, experience, and cultural setting. O’malley et al. (1990) made a detailed explanation of the writing procedure: 1. Meta-cognitive, serving as planning the structure of written discourse or monitoring; 2. Cognitive, in the manner, that using known linguistic information to facilitate a new learning task; 3. Social/affective strategies, such as cooperating with peer revision classes. In addition, Sun (2014) suggests three main steps for Schema theory-based writing instruction: 1. Activating existing schemata. 2. Construct new schemata. 3. Consolidating students’ schemata.

Hence, writing is the process that ESL learners are expected to activate existing schemata, construct new schemata, and consolidate schemata (see figure one). From above, we should follow some main points: 1. In Continuation writing, linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema are combined to work. 2. Learners’ schema can be built and enhanced in the process of pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing, which contains preparations, drafting, revising, editing, evaluating, and summary.
Given that attitudes have been associated with distinctive aspects of the continuing task and schema theory, the present study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of schema-theory-based instructional design for different linguistic elements.

**Method**

This section contains the research questions and research design. The fourteen-week teaching experiment was conducted to determine the effect of Schema Theory on Senior High School Continuation task writing. To ensure the reliability and accuracy of schema theory applied to writing, the quantity and quality measurements were adopted in this research.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions served as the direction for the investigation:

1. What effects do schema theory-based Continuation task instructions have on students’ overall writing competence?
2. What effects do schema theory-based Continuation task instructions have on the lexical richness of students’ writing?
3. What effects do schema theory-based Continuation task instructions have on the syntactic complexity of students’ writing?
4. What effects do schema theory-based Continuation task instructions have on the semantic coherence of students’ writing?

**Participants**

At the beginning of the first semester, 110 freshmen at senior high school in Heze, a city of northern China, participated in the experiment. The school was chosen randomly from a pool of five public senior high schools in the city. Participants were selected following the purposive sampling principle and they were from two parallel classes, class 11 and class 12, with 55 students respectively. Class 11 was the experimental class with the guidance of the schema-based teaching method. While Class 12 was the control group, and they received instruction using the conventional methods. Table one shows the basic information of the participants.
Table 1. *Basic Information of participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of learning English</th>
<th>The average of score (150-point scale)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>About 8 years</td>
<td>97.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>95.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: EC=experimental class; CC=control class

**Research Instruments**

*Pre-test and Post-test*

The purpose of the pre-test was to determine whether students from the two distinct classes continued to write at the same level. While the purpose of the post-test was to determine whether students' writing skills improved after receiving schema-based instruction. The two tests were selected from the Continuation tasks in the Zhejiang NMET English test paper (see Appendix A). During the test, students were given 25 minutes to develop an unfinished source story within 150 words.

*Interview*

After the teaching intervention, six students, including two top students, two average students, and two low-level students were chosen to participate in the structured interview, and they answered the following questions: (1) What do you think of the new teaching approach? (2) Does the new teaching approach bring some benefits to you? What are these benefits? (3) Do you have any suggestions for the Continuation task writing class? To avoid confusion, participants were permitted to use their first language when necessary.

**Research Procedures**

The experiment ran for 14 weeks to examine the effectiveness of Schema theory in the Continuation task teaching (see figure two).

*Figure 2. Experimental design*

In the beginning, the researchers carried out a pre-test to fathom students’ writing levels. Selected from the writing assignment for the 2016 Zhejiang NMET, the text paper was marked by a researcher and three experienced English teachers following *The Chinese Detailed Grading Rules on the National Matriculation English*. 
The students in control and experimental groups were separated to attend different classes, which were assigned weekly. In the Control class, students received the traditional writing procedure. While in experimental class, the subjects would complete their compositions under the guidance of Schema theory.

After the experiment training, the researchers conducted a post-test in two classes. The test materials were selected from the writing part of the Zhejiang entrance examination papers, 2017 which they had never written before. All students in both classes were required to finish about 150 words in 30 minutes. Then, the students from EC were requested to accomplish the interview, aiming to figure out the effect schema-oriented writing teaching approach has on the students.

**Design of Teaching Intervention**

*Teaching procedures in the Experimental Class*

In experimental class, the subjects were instructed to complete their compositions under the guidance of Schema theory. Table two illustrated the flow of the teaching procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. A summary of the flow of the teaching procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. The teaching design in the pre-writing stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schemata processing: Activating existing schemata and constructing linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example activities: providing relevant background knowledge materials; pre-reading questions, outlining the structure of the source text; semantic mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. The teaching design in the while-writing stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schemata processing: Constructing new schemata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example activities: drafting; making an outline of the story; revising the words and grammar; teacher supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. The teaching design in the post-writing stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schemata processing: Consolidating new schemata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example activities: self-editing and peer-editing; evaluating by teachers; Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table two, activating existing schemata and building new schemata should be accomplished in the pre-writing stage. Schemata activation refers to inspiring the existing components of schema to help students predict what comes next in the source text (Anderson, 1984). In this scenario, teachers should strive to cultivate their students for them to realize and appreciate schemata activation. Before reading the source text, a brief introduction to the general topic, such as relevant reading materials, pictures, and short videos, can lay the groundwork for students to proceed well. Then, the focus should be turned to framework analysis. Carrell (1984a) did an experiment to prove that a precise critique of the text structure can serve to enhance learners’ reading comprehension. In the writing task, understanding the source text's organization will be crucial for understanding and plot prediction in the continuation assignment. Take *Arthur and robbery* as an example (see table three).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. The outline of the story: <em>Arthur and robbery</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wh</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Empirical Research on Schema Theory

Wang & Chen

Beginning: Arthur helped a young man who carried a big suitcase.
Development: Arthur heard the long, loud noise. He realized that the young man might be a bank thief.
Climax: Because of carrying the suitcase, Arthur was suspected as the robber.
Frightened and nervous, Arthur ran. (Finished by students)
Ending: Arthur took a taxi and went to the police station. (Finished by students)

Additionally, students can build a bridge between the unfinished part and the source text through semantic mapping. Semantic mapping is a diagram that aids group discussion and helps students to see how concepts and ideas correlated to others (Freedman & Reynolds, 1980; Johnson et al., 1986). It reveals what students already know about the topic and provides a base upon which they can construct the new information acquired and extracted from a text. Take *Arthur and robbery* as another example (see figure three).

![Figure 3: Semantic Map](image-url)

Figure 3. Semantic map

According to Rumelhart (1980), schemata bring connected concepts to life in the memory, suggesting that schemata would be useful for students to examine the text's material and construct new information. The teacher focuses on cultivating students’ new schema, including linguistic schemata, content schemata and formal schemata. Linguistic schemata served as the cornerstone of writing, which refers to basic knowledge of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Content schemata refer to students' familiarity with their related background knowledge, such as subject-specific knowledge, cultural knowledge, and life experiences. Formal schemata are the understanding of the genre and organization of a text, such as allegories, narratives, poetry, and
plays. To sum up, based on the pre-writing activities, the existing schemata in students’ minds have been activated and the new schemata constructed.

In the while-writing period, students should give full play to the related schema knowledge to transform information into sentences and paragraphs. During this period, firstly, students are supposed to make an outline according to the pre-writing activities and organize their ideas to complete the compositions of a specific topic independently within a required amount of time in class. In this phase, they do not need to care too much about grammar and spellings but focus on the story’s content. In this way, students can pay attention to the development of the storyline and apply what they have formed to the upcoming process of while-writing. Secondly, after finishing the draft, the students are supposed to read their compositions to correct words, grammar, and others. During while-writing, teachers should observe the whole writing process and offer instructions. Moreover, students have 30 minutes to do their 150-word writing assignments.

Editing, including self-editing and peer-editing, remains a crucial stage in post-writing period. Seen as a complex and repeated process of trade-off and refinement, the process of editing plays a significant role in consolidating students’ schemata and unleashing their passions for writing. According to composition marking standards, teachers are primarily responsible for analyzing composition structures, sentence content, grammar, and vocabulary (Appendix B). After editing and evaluating, students were required to rewrite their drafts based on the instructor's and their classmates' comments after distributing their works.

Teaching procedures in the Control Class
Step 1: At the beginning, the teacher gave students a sample essay about a fixated topic.
Step 2: After reading the passage, the teacher mainly walked students through vocabulary, phrases, and grammar. The teacher then gives instructions on how to learn important words, phrases, and sentence patterns.
Step 3: The teacher translated the essay sentence by sentence, and let students focus on the grammar.
Step 4: The instructor paid attention to the genre and structure of the writing sample, and allowed the students to use it as a model for their own compositions.
Step 5: Submit completed pieces, and the teacher will check these works after class.

Measures
We adapted the English Writing Scoring Rubric for College Entrance Examination (see Appendix B) to rate students’ writing tasks, with a final score of 25. The researchers and three experienced raters scored test papers independently, and then took the average score as the final. Compared with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines; Common European Framework of Reference for English Curriculum Standards; China’s Standards of English Language Ability, and the scoring rubric, the measurement of writing ability can be concluded within three criteria: lexical richness, syntactic complexity, Semantic coherence(Plakans & Gebril, 2013) (see Appendix C).

Lexical richness is about the quality of vocabulary in a language sample, which mainly focuses on lexical variation and lexical sophistication. (Wolfe-Quintero, 1998). On the one hand, the types-tokens ratio (TTR) defines lexical variation as the frequency of the same word in a
Lexical sophistication, on the other hand, is the fraction of 'advanced' terms in the text. Syntactic complexity reveals itself in second language writing through the variety and sophistication of production units and grammatical structures (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 2003; Wolfe-Quintero, 1998). In this research, the measurement of syntactic complexity adopted three most commonly used measures: length of the production unit, clause density, and frequency of sentence types. In this study, the Continuation task is a narration and examined for students writing semantic relatedness. Accordingly, the author will take Latent semantic analysis as an indicator to measure the semantic coherence of the Continuation task. Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) does not rely on the superficial feature of the text. Instead, it provides a fully automatic method for comparing units of textual information to each other to determine their semantic relatedness (Foltz et al., 1998). There are three variables in LSA, namely LSA sentence all, LSA paragraph, and LSA sentence adjacent. Since the top sentences in each section have already been given in the Continuation task, we analyzed LSA sentence all and LSA sentence adjacent.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

**Data collection**

In this study, the researchers collected 220 valid compositions from Experimental Class (EC) and Control Class (CC) in the pre-test and the post-test, 110 students each from the pre-test and the post-test. To guarantee the reliability of the scores from all participants, besides the researchers, three experienced teachers were invited to grade composition based on the *English Writing Scoring Rubric for College Entrance Examination* (see appendix B). If the difference in scores graded by three teachers is less than three points, the average value would be considered the final score.

**Data Analysis**

The scores of participants writing were recorded with Excel and analyzed by SPSS 25.0. Data analysis mainly included lexical richness, syntactic complexity, and semantic coherence. The online tool Vocabprofile (http://www.lexutor.ca/vp/eng/), created by Paul Nation and Averil Coxhead, was used to analyze lexical richness. Scientifically, it was able to determine the precise number of word varieties. The online software L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (https://aihaiyang.com/software/l2sca/), built by Professor Lu Xiaofei, was used to analyze syntactic complexity. In this study, the author uses Coh-Metrix (http://www.cohmetrix.com/), a web-based discourse analyzer to deter students’ discourse. It was designed by McNamara together with his team. Among the 11 Coh-Metrix analysis indicators, Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) is viewed as a practical method that provides an accurate assessment of semantic coherence (McNamara et al., 2014).

**Results**

**Results from the Tests**

**Research question 1: Overall writing competence**

Before the experiment, a pre-test was offered to evaluate students' potential for Continuation tasks. Writing test materials were selected from the Zhejiang college entrance examination papers (see appendix A), with a total score of 25.
Table 4. *Independent sample T-test of the pre-test scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16.747</td>
<td>2.221</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16.212</td>
<td>2.617</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table four, the mean pre-test scores of the experimental group and the control group were 16.747 and 16.212, respectively. The P-value (Sig.) was equal to 0.543, which was greater than the significance level of 0.05. Statistics above certified there was no apparent distinction in writing competence between students from EC and CC. After four months of training, both classes took part in the post-test.

Table 5. *Independent sample T-test of post-test scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18.034</td>
<td>3.214</td>
<td>3.904</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>17.298</td>
<td>2.029</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table five, the mean score of the EC(18.034) was higher than the CC(17.298), and the P-value was 0.001(<0.05), indicating a marked difference in mean post-test scores between the two groups.

Table 6. *Paired-samples T-tests of the Scores of the Experimental Class*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16.212</td>
<td>2.617</td>
<td>3.016</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18.034</td>
<td>3.214</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the independent samples T-test, paired samples T-tests were employed to compare the pre-test and the post-test performance of EC and CC pupils. In table six, the mean score of the post-test in the EC was 18.034, higher than the pre-test(16.212). The P-value of 0.000(<0.05) reveals a statistically significant difference between the two data sets.

**Research question 2: Lexical richness**

The effect on lexical richness is presented from two indexes: lexical variation and lexical sophistication.

**Lexical variation**

TTR (Type-token ratio) is a measure of lexical variation. The number of words in a text is regarded as the number of tokens. The P-value(0.002<0.05) in table seven indicates a considerable distinction between the Experimental Class and the Control Class.

Table 7. *Independent-Samples T-test of Lexical Variation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>TTR</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.573</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>-.681</td>
<td>.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.556</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>TTR</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.683</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>2.853</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table eight displays the EC's test results for the pre-test and the post-test. The mean EC post-test score was 0.683, which was higher than the mean EC pre-test score (0.573). Moreover, the P-value of 0.000 (<0.05) suggests that the results are substantially different.

Table 8. Paired Samples t-test of lexical variation of the experimental class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>TTR</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.573</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>2.447</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>TTR</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lexical sophistication**

As an important addition to the lexical richness, the distribution of the three bands of words was used to quantify lexical sophistication.

Table 9. Lexical sophistication of EC and CC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>EC</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (%)</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean (%)</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>K1 words</td>
<td>88.136%</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>88.721%</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K2 words</td>
<td>9.87%</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>9.34%</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K3 words</td>
<td>3.16%</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>K1 words</td>
<td>81.17%</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>86.83%</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K2 words</td>
<td>12.52%</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>10.51%</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K3 words</td>
<td>6.32%</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>3.62%</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
K1 words: The proportion of the first 1000 words of a composition that are used the most.
K2 words: The proportion of the second 1000 most frequent words in the composition.
K3 words: The proportion of a composition's words that are beyond the first 2000 high-frequency words.

Table nine presents the lexical sophistication of the pre-test and the post-test in both EC and CC. In the pre-test, there was no significant difference between K1 words, K2 words, and K3 words in EC and CC. Their P-values were 0.647 (>0.05), 0.359 (>0.05), and 0.637 (>0.05), respectively. In the post-test. The mean scores of K1 words were 81.17% and 86.83%, respectively, in EC and CC. There is a significant difference between them in terms of K1 words (p=0.025<0.05). As for the percentage of K2 words, data extracted from EC (12.52%) was equal to that of CC (10.51%), and the difference is statistically significant (p=.004<0.05). Besides, the mean scores of K3 were 6.32% and 3.62% in EC and CC, respectively. The difference had also reached a statistically significant level. (p=0.001<0.05).
Table 10. Paired samples t-tests of lexical sophistication of the experimental class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (%)</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean (%)</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>K1 words</td>
<td>88.13%</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>81.17%</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K2 words</td>
<td>9.87%</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>12.52%</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K3 words</td>
<td>3.16%</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>6.32%</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table ten shows that in K1, K2, and K3 terms, the mean lexical sophistication for the EC was 88.13%, 9.87%, and 3.16%, compared to 81.17%, 12.52%, and 6.32% for the CC. The P-values were 0.007, 0.003 and 0.021, and all of them were far away from 0.05. This has shown significant changes between pre-test and post-test in the EC.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the Schema-Oriented Approach contributed much more than traditional teaching regarding increasing lexical variation in students’ composition.

Research question 3: syntactic complexity

To answer question three, we focus on the syntactic features from three aspects: production unit length; clause density, and sentence patterns.

Production Unit Length

Table eleven shows the mean values and standard deviations of production unit lengths. The mean scores of W/T in the pre-test were 11.02 in EC and 10.78 in CC. The mean scores (8.25, 8.19) and P-values (0.203, 0.25) of production unit length in the pre-test revealed two classes were almost at the same level. In the post-test, there was a statistical difference between their unit length. (P-value in W/T=0.014<0.05; P-value in W/C=0.002<0.05).

Table 11. Independent sample t-test of the length of the production unit of EC and CC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>W/T</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11.02</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.934</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W/C</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8.52</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.841</td>
<td>.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>W/T</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12.94</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>4.627</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11.31</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W/C</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.147</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To depict changes more precisely, the Paired Samples T-test was used to analyze the data. In table twelve, the mean of W/T and W/C for the EC were 11.02 and 8.52, while that for the CC was 12.94 and 10.61. The P-values in W/T and W/C were 0.004(<0.05) and 0.001(<0.05), which represented significant changes between the pre-test and the post-test in the EC.
Table 12. Paired sample T-test of the length of the production unit of EC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>W/T</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11.02</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>9.173</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12.94</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W/C</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8.52</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>5.326</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clause Density

The second index is clause density, qualifying through T-unit complex ratio (C/T) and dependent clause ratio (DC/C).

Table 13. Independent sample t-test of clause density of EC and CC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>C/T</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.282</td>
<td>2.643</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.256</td>
<td>2.579</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DC/C</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>4.106</td>
<td>-2.367</td>
<td>.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>3.887</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>C/T</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.286</td>
<td>4.022</td>
<td>-2.987</td>
<td>.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.249</td>
<td>3.557</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DC/C</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>2.634</td>
<td>1.338</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>3.259</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table thirteen, two classes were at the same level of clause density before the trial (p=0.137, 0.299). In the pre-test, there was a minor difference in the post-test mean score of C/T and DC/C. Furthermore, the P-values for C/T and DC/C were 0.246(0.05) and 0.108(0.05), respectively. Altogether, the implementation of the Schema theory had no significant effect on students’ clause density.

Sentence Patterns

Sentence pattern refers to simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences.

Table 14. Independent sample T-test of sentence patterns in the pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple sentence</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7.496</td>
<td>1.734</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7.314</td>
<td>2.012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound sentence</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.584</td>
<td>2.100</td>
<td>1.204</td>
<td>.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.266</td>
<td>1.666</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex sentence</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.212</td>
<td>1.169</td>
<td>.487</td>
<td>.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.347</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex-compound sentence</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>1.202</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.425</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table fourteen shows that there was no significant difference between the two groups in the use of simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and complex-compound sentences before the instructional experiment (p=0.337>0.05, p=0.425>0.05, p=0.283>0.05, p=0.106>0.05).

Table 15. *Independent sample t-test of sentence patterns in the post-test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple sentence</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5.012</td>
<td>2.565</td>
<td>5.253</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7.387</td>
<td>2.557</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound sentence</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5.843</td>
<td>2.832</td>
<td>3.172</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.923</td>
<td>1.442</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex sentence</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.321</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.463</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex-compound sentence</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.457</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>-2.453</td>
<td>.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table fifteen concerns sentence patterns in the post-test. Participants from EC applied more compound sentences than their peers in CC (5.843>3.923). Also, there was a reduced number of simple sentences in EC (5.012<7.387). The frequency of simple sentences and compound phrases varied significantly between EC and CC, as shown by the Independent-samples T-test (p=0.009<0.05; p=0.029<0.05). However, the two groups' mean scores for complicated phrases and complex-compound sentences were quite similar (p=0.429>0.05; p=0.124>0.05).

Table 16. *Paired samples t-tests of sentence patterns of the experimental class*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple sentence</td>
<td>7.496</td>
<td>1.734</td>
<td>5.012</td>
<td>2.565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound sentence</td>
<td>3.584</td>
<td>2.100</td>
<td>5.843</td>
<td>2.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex sentence</td>
<td>1.212</td>
<td>1.169</td>
<td>1.321</td>
<td>1.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex-compound sentence</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>0.457</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from table sixteen that the frequency of using sample sentences was decreasing, while that of complex sentences and compound sentences experienced a marked rise. Meanwhile, the P-values of simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences were 0.001(<0.05) and 0.002(<0.05). Therefore, there was a statistically significant distinction in the frequency of simple and compound sentences. P-values of 0.456 and 0.123 (>0.05) for complex and complex-compound sentences, respectively, indicating that there was no significant difference. Thus, Schema-oriented training has been seen as more effective for enhancing the application of simple and compound phrases.

*Research question 4: Semantic Coherence*

To explain the changes in students’ writings in terms of semantic coherence, LSA sentence all and LSA sentence adjacent will be analyzed.
**LSA sentence all**

LSA sentence all explores the semantic coherence among all sentences; The higher the value is, the more overall semantic coherence the compositions are.

Table 17. *Descriptive statistics of LSA sentence all in EC and CC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>LSA sentence all</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td>.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>LSA sentence all</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>3.482</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table seventeen, the pre-test mean values of LSA sentences by EC and CC remained almost the same (0.094; 0.091). After the experiment, the mean value of LSA sentences all in the post-test had witnessed a significant change (p=0.025<0.05).

Table 18. *Paired samples t-tests of LSA sentence all, LSA sentence adjacent in EC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSA sentence all</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>3.016</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table eighteen shows the statistical value of LSA sentences all from EC in the pre-test and post-test. The mean score of the post-test in the EC was 0.131, higher than that of the pre-test’s 0.094. Moreover, the P-value was 0.002<0.05, indicating a significant difference between the two data sets.

**LSA sentence Adjacent**

Another coherence index is LSA sentence adjacent, which reflects the partial semantic coherence of adjacent sentences.

Table 19. *Descriptive statistics of LSA sentence adjacent in EC and CC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>LSA sentence adjacent</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>1.254</td>
<td>.469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>LSA sentence adjacent</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>4.128</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown in table nineteen, the mean score of the LSA sentence adjacent to EC in the pre-test was almost the same as that in CC (0.113;0.112). After the trial, the mean score of EC was higher (0.171>0.111). This table shows that the mean LSA sentence value next to the pre-test did not change significantly from that of the post-test (p=0.469), but the post-test showed a significant difference (p=0.001<0.05).

Table 20. *Paired samples t-tests of LSA sentence all, LSA sentence adjacent in EC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSA sentence adjacent</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>2.987</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table twenty demonstrated that all LSA sentence nearby values increased following the education trial. Moreover, differences can be seen in the pre-test and the post-test (p=0.002<0.05).

**Results from the Interview**

Moreover, the phenomena were complemented by the interview. Five students declared that they preferred the schema-oriented teaching approach, while only one low-level student showed disapproving attitude. Acting as a representative, a student at medium-level stated, “The new teaching model makes me feel less stressed during composition. After the discussion with students and teachers in brainstorming, I become more organized in composing a continuation task”. When asked about their efforts and benefits toward Schema theory, all interviewees stated that the new teaching approach is conducive to their completion of the Continuation task. One of the low-level students insisted, “I have made some progress in sentence expressions. For instance, I used to write simple sentences only, but now I find the importance to write more compound sentences”.

Overall, these signs suggest that schema theory-based education has improved the overall achievement, lexical richness, syntactic complexity, and semantic coherence of the participants.

**Discussion**

**Effect on Overall Writing Competence**

Schema theory honed up students’ overall writing competence effectively, especially for medium-level students, who saw the most noticeable progress against their peers. Similar findings can be found in Sun (2014), Zhou (2005), Li (1998), and Johns (1986) who argued that writing teaching based on Schema theory has a positive effect on students’ English writing competence. In the process of schema-oriented writing instruction, learners’ schema was activated by pedagogical practice: firstly, inherent knowledge was activated to streamline their current abilities to understand and learn(Bransford et al., 1986), doing pre-writing activities (brainstorming; experience sharing; guided questions;) and analyzing the language style of reading materials are viable ways to activate the existing schema and construct new ones. Secondly, students in corporative reading and writing had significantly higher achievements in reading comprehension, and language expression(Stevens, 2003). For instance, exercises like collaboratively creating the story's outline and semantic maps would influence students to solidify new schema, as well as composition construction. Thirdly, as Chandler (2003) has suggested, linguistic competence is required for learners to interpret written corrective feedback. In the post-writing stage, students participate in peer review and self-revision to reinforce their new schema and enhance their preexisting ones. As a result, the new teaching strategy focuses more on input and output than traditional pedagogy does.

**Effect on the Lexical Richness**

The Schema oriented approach could improve students’ lexical richness of the Continuation task. In this study, it was represented by lexical variation and lexical sophistication. Several researchers suggest that the representation of lexical variation was richer in synonyms in which words and expressions remained constantly various. (Geeraerts et al., 2012; Wasow et al., 2011; Zhao, 2016). Students’ work demonstrated that verbs like blow, click, and waft were utilized to vividly express wind movement. Synonyms such as *suppose, believe, guess,* and *assume* could substitute *think*. The improvement of lexical variation is performed in various phrase expressions.
For example, when presenting the scene of Jane’s sadness, students in EC applied *tears streaming down her face; shivering all over with sad and sorrowful memories flooded out* to make his composition brimming with rich sentiments.

**Effect on Syntactic Complexity**

Compared with the pre-test statistic, the average number of words in the post-test mirrored a significant difference in unit length under the guidance of the Schema theory-oriented approach. It is attributed to the content schema and linguistic schema. In the linguistic schema-building stage, the teacher trained students to apply various descriptive expressions in describing appearance, environment, and mental conflict through semantic maps. With the accumulation of words and phrases, students had more choices for their content output based on the input and reconstruction schema. It is consistent with Krashen's (1982) meaningful input theory and indicates that the input of schema activation can be significant if the students internalize the input.

As for clause density, there was no significant difference. This finding is opposite to those in Hundarenko (2019)’s research. In his tasks, more students can pay attention to their clause density in their academic writing through the schema theory teaching approach, thus producing high-quality scripts. To investigate the causes, researchers examined the compositions that students had produced while undergoing instruction and found that in the early stages of the experiment, students tended to add more clauses to enhance the content of their works. Thus, there tended to be an increase in the C/T ratio (one of the indexes to measure clause density) in compositions. As the investigation proceeded, students were trained to use accurate and simplified phrases to replace disjointed and obscure clauses, leading to a decrease in the C/T of the compositions in the post-test. Moreover, Language competency is gradually and abruptly enhanced (Baaqeel, 2020), which means Students require further work to develop their writing skills. When students become more aware of errors and content quality, they may not pay sufficient attention to the correctness of complicated phrase patterns. Thus, as for the other index of clause density, dependent clauses (DC) were employed in a broader range after the trial, while the frequency of clause adoption was constantly a variable. Thus, the ratio of DC/C was a variable. As a result, there was little change in the clause density.

**Effect on Semantic Coherence**

From the statistics above, we can conclude that the Schema theory-based teaching model has a positive effect on helping students to enhance the overall and partial semantic coherence of their compositions. The result mirrors Li's (1998)’ survey, indicating that content schema and formal schema play significant roles in writing. The content schema contains the background schema that already existed in their brain and the new schema that relays on the text and the formal schema in narration is the chronological order.

After the training of content schema and formal schema, there is an inevitable increase in LSA sentence all and LSA sentence adjunct semantic coherence in the post-test of EC by the improvement of LSA sentence all and LSA sentence adjacent. Several researchers have already described the process training methods to improve semantic coherence in the Continuation task(Cui et al., 2019; Peng et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2020). For instance, Peng (2020) investigates the method's coherence alignment between the original text and the student's creation. By activating
and recreating the formal schema, the researchers in this study increased the semantic coherence of the Continuation task. In formal schema training, the instructor instructed pupils on how to use chronological order in their writing. The composition should follow a narrative model which covers the beginning, the development of the main idea, climax, and conclusion. For instance, Students were taught to use conjunctions to indicate chronological sequence, such as at first, next, soon, eventually, and since then. As stated by Li (1990), prediction capacity was the most useful method for connecting formal schema with semantic coherence. Accordingly, in formal schema training, students were instructed to evaluate the language characteristics and structure of source material to develop a new schema based on the source text. In addition, the underlined words in the original text should be highlighted to foretell the story's development. Therefore, students guided by Schema theory-based approach witnessed a remarkable improvement in a logical structure and semantic coherence

Conclusion

We discovered the possible impacts of schema theory applied in the continuation task using the performance derived from the pre-test and the post-test. Firstly, the results demonstrated that the schema theory activates language schema, content schema, and formal schema, which have a substantial impact on learners' total writing skills. Secondly, writing grounded in Schema theory instruction could cultivate students' sensitivity to lexical richness. It helps learners develop language that is more complicated and sophisticated. In addition, the increasing use of adjectives, synonyms, and superordinate patterns enhances the variety of written expressions. Thirdly, Schema-oriented instruction has limited effect on improving syntactic complexity. Students become increasingly tempted to use longer sentences. In addition, the proportion of simple sentences on the post-test has reduced, while the proportion of complicated phrases has increased. However, there is no significant relevance to the changes in clause density and complex sentence and compound-complex sentence patterns. It is likely that students place a higher value on content quality and avoiding errors by avoiding complex phrase patterns. Finally, the author explored the influence brought by the new teaching method on semantic coherence. The changes of LSA sentence all and LSA sentence adjacent have demonstrated that the method enhances the coherence of writing. Findings in this study also provide advisable information that can guide L2 writing teachers’ decisions in designing the Continuation task. Rather than caring too much about grammar errors, teachers may choose to devote time and energy to the process of schema activation and schema reconstruction by analyzing and outlining the source language before the task. With the language style in alignment with the given story, students tend to flesh out their ideas in a spontaneous way. Some limitations have inevitably appeared in this study. First, the samples of participants may be strengthened with more widespread grades. Second, this research gives the limelight to language and discourse. Students’ mental capability and thinking patterns await further exploration.

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Reference


**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

**Pre-test Task and Post-test Task**

**【Pre-test Task】**

A vacation with my mother

I had an interesting childhood: It was filled with surprise and amusements, all because of my mother-loving, sweet, and yet absent-minded and forgetful. One strange family trip we took when I was eleven tells a lot about her. My two sets of grandparents lived in Colorado and North Dakota, and my parents decided to spend a few weeks driving to those states and seeing all the sights along the way. As the first day of our trip approached, David, my eight-year-old brother, and I unwillingly said good-bye to all of our friends. Who knew if we’d ever see them again? Finally, the moment of our departure arrived, and we loaded suitcases, books, games, camping equipment, and a tent into the car and bravely drove off. We bravely drove off again two hours later after we’d returned home to get the purse and traveler’s checks Mom had forgotten.

David and I were always a little nervous when using gas station bathrooms if Mom was driving while Dad slept.” You stand outside the door and play lookout while I go, and I’ll stand outside the door and play lookout while you go.” I had terrible pictures in my mind: “Honey, where are the kids?” “What?! Oh, Gosh… I thought they were being awfully quiet.” We were never actually left behind in a strange city, but we weren’t about to take any chances.
On the fourth or fifth night, we had trouble finding a hotel with a vacancy. After driving in vain for some time, Mom suddenly got a great idea: Why didn’t we find a house with a likely-looking backyard and ask if we could set up tent there? David and I became nervous. To our great relief, Dad turned down the idea. Mom never could understand our objections. If a strange family showed up on her front doorsteps, Mom would have been delighted. She thinks everyone in the world as nice as she is. We finally found a vacancy in the next town.

Paragraph 1

The next day we remembered the brand-new tent we had brought with us.

Paragraph 2

We drove through several states and saw lots of great sights along the way.

【Post-test Task】

One weekend in July, Jane and her husband, Tom, had driven three hours to camp overnight by a lake in the forest. Unfortunately, on the way an unpleasant subject came up and they started to quarrel. By the time they reached the lake, Jane was so angry that she said to Tom. “I’m going to find a better spot for us to camp” and walked away.

With no path to follow, Jane just walked on for quite a long time. After she had climbed to a high place, she turned around, hoping to see the lake. To her surprise, she saw nothing but forest and, far beyond, a snowcapped mountain top. She suddenly realized that she was lost.

“Tom! ”she cried. "Help!"

No reply. If only she had not left her mobile phone in that bag with Tom. Jane kept moving, but the farther she walked, the more confused she became. As night was beginning to fall, Jane was so tired that she had to stop for the night. Lying awake in the dark, Jane wanted very much to be with Tom and her family. She wanted to hold him and tell him how much she loved him.

Jane rose at the break of day, hungry and thirsty. She could hear water trickling somewhere at a distance. Quickly she followed the sound to a stream. To her great joy, she also saw some berry bushes. She drank and ate a few berries. Never in her life had she tasted anything better. Feeling stronger now, Jane began to walk along the stream and hope it would lead her to the lake.

As she picked her way carefully along the stream, Jane heard a helicopter. Is that for me? Unfortunately, the trees made it impossible for people to see her from above. A few minutes later, another helicopter flew overhead. Jane took off her yellow blouse, thinking that she should go to an open area and flag them if they came back again.

注意:
1. 所续写短文的词数应为150左右;
2. 应使用5个以上短文中标有下划线的关键词语;
3. 续写部分分为两段，每段开头语已为你写好;
4. 续写完成后，请用下划线标出你所使用的关键词语。

Paragraph 1

But no more helicopters came and it was getting dark again.

Paragraph 2

It was daybreak when Jane woke up.

Appendix B

English Writing Scoring Rubric for College Entrance Examination

The Continuation assignment has a total score of 25, which is divided into five stages.

Band 5 (21-25)

• The continuation is closely related to the source text's key topics.
• The continuation adds substantial substance to the plot and thoroughly meets all assignment criteria.
• The continuation employs correct and varied grammatical structures and vocabulary, with minor faults that do not impair comprehension.
• The conclusion is well-structured and consistent. Sentences inside paragraphs are successfully linked together by using suitable, well-chosen, and diverse transition words and other cohesion methods.

Band 4 (16-20)
• The continuation is related to the source text's primary concepts.
• The continuation develops the tale with sufficient material and meets the assignment criteria.
• The continuation employs grammatical structures and vocabulary that are relatively accurate and diversified, with minimal faults that do not impair comprehension.
• The continuation is well-structured and consistent. Sentences inside paragraphs are successfully linked to one another via the use of suitable and diverse transition words and other cohesion strategies.

Band 3 (11-15)
• The continuation is mostly related to the source text's primary topics.
• The continuation adds some meaningful stuff to the plot and basically meets the task criteria.
• The continuation employs a wide range of grammatical structures and vocabulary, with some faults that do not impair comprehension.
• The continuation is well-structured and cohesive. Simple transition words and other cohesion methods link sentences inside paragraphs.

Band 2 (6-10)
• The continuation is tangentially related to the primary text.
• The continuation has minimal substance and only partially meets the task requirements.
• The continuation employs a restricted set of grammatical structures and vocabulary, with certain faults that may impair comprehension.
• The continuation lacks organization and coherence. Transition words and other cohesion techniques are used sparingly in sentences within paragraphs.

Band 1 (1-5)
• The continuation has little or no resemblance to the primary material.
• The continuation has minimal substance and does not meet the task criteria.
• The continuation employs a restricted set of elementary grammatical structures and vocabulary, with numerous faults that impair comprehension.
• There is no organization or coherence in the continuation. Transition words and other cohesion mechanisms are either ineffective or absent.

### Appendix C

**Measures used to Analyze Test Takers' Writing Ability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical richness</td>
<td>lexical variation</td>
<td>WT/W</td>
<td>The ratio of the number between types and tokens (TTR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lexical sophistication</td>
<td>LFP (lexical frequency profile)</td>
<td>The ratio of K1 (the first most frequent 1000 words), K2 (the second most frequent 2000 words), and complex words (beyond K1 and K2 words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic complexity</td>
<td>Length of production unit</td>
<td>T-unit Length</td>
<td>Number of words/number of T-units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clause length</td>
<td>T-unit complexity ratio(C/T)</td>
<td>Number of clause/number of T-unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dependent clause ratio(DC/C)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of dependent clause/number of clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of sentence type</td>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Number of simple sentences/number of sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compound</td>
<td>Number of compound sentences/number of sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>Number of complex sentences/number of sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compound-complex</td>
<td>Number of compound-complex sentences/number of sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic Coherence</td>
<td>LSA(Latent Semantic Analysis)</td>
<td>LSA sentence all</td>
<td>the coherence among all sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LSA sentence adjacent</td>
<td>semantic relatedness between sentences adjacent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conflict in Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale: A Critical Discourse Approach

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Abstract
Conflict is a common but complicated phenomenon. It has been extensively researched in many domains, including philosophy, sociology, psychology, and linguistics. Using the Critical Discourse Approach, this study examines the issue of self-society conflict in The Handmaid’s Tale. The significance of this work lies in the identification and explanation of the discursive strategies that force the ideological polarization of the positively portrayed self versus the negatively portrayed other. The purpose of this study is to answer two questions: what are the discursive strategies used in The Handmaid’s Tale to create a positive or negative representation, and how are these strategies implemented? Five extracts from The Handmaid’s Tale were examined using eight of Van Dijk’s discursive strategies (2006). The findings show the pervasiveness of the discursive strategies in The Handmaid’s Tale, which attempt to transmit the ideological polarization of a positive portrayal of the self against a negative presentation of the other. Students of critical discourse analysis, communications studies, and of English, in particular, may find the findings useful.

Keywords: conflict, critical discourse analysis, discursive strategies, self-society conflict, The Handmaid’s Tale

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Introduction
Conflict is an all-encompassing phenomenon that can be found throughout literature. It occurs in any context, institution, or organization due to differences in people's perspectives, desires, perceptions, and requirements. It can be viewed as a competition between people with competing wants, ideas, convictions, or ambitions. Algert (1996) states that conflict is a struggle between opposing forces, usually a protagonist and an antagonist. Literature often shows the conflict between Man and Society. Man vs. Society’s main character disagrees with a larger group such as a community, society, culture, etc. A primary character battles with prevailing opinions or communal values. It is also described as an adversarial condition of resistance characterized by disagreement between two or more parties. This paper sheds light on the theme of self-society conflict in five chosen extracts from The Handmaid’s Tale novel.

In reality, the concept of conflict has researched from a social, linguistic, and psychological standpoint. It is at the center of current studies, but the purpose of this study is to examine this notion in The Handmaid’s Tale novel from a critical standpoint. Thus, the present study will bridge the gap in the literature by studying the discursive strategies that underlie the self-society conflict in The Handmaid’s Tale novel. The work will be helpful to linguistics since it aims to addresses the issue of self-society conflict in texts. This will contribute to the area of linguistics by providing new understandings of the language that are required by the writer to generate specific beliefs through the use of specific linguistic strategies. It is significant to enrich the domains of linguistics in general and critical studies in particular by researching the concept of self-society conflict in literature. As a result, it provides comprehension of The Handmaid’s Tale language. This benefits not only linguistics but also literature by providing new insights into the concept of self-society conflict. The purpose of this study is to investigate, through critical discourse analysis, the discursive strategies used in the novel The Handmaid’s Tale. For this purpose, we adopt Van Dijk's (2006) methodology to examine five extracts from The Handmaid’s Tale. The focus of the analysis is the polarization of positive self-presentation versus negative other presentations. The researchers seek to answer the following:

1-What are the discursive strategies that uncover the ideologies used by the characters in the novel to convince the readers and to create a positive or negative representation?
2-How are these strategies implemented?

Literature Review
Conflict and Critical Discourse Analysis
Conflict is a significant theme in Atwood’s novels and shows in her writing. Conflict happens in any setting, institution, or organization because of variations in people’s views, desires, perceptions, and needs. Conflict is an adversarial condition of resistance characterized by disagreement between two or more parties (Wilmont, 2001). It is a connection between two or more individuals or groups who have or believe they have irreconcilable goals and needs. As a result, the incompatibility could be real or perceived, involving material and, or symbolic resources. Most people view conflict as a bad term with negative implications. Conflict categorizes into many types, such as intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict, intergroup conflict, intragroup conflict, inter-organization conflict, and intra-organization conflict(Al-Mamary &Hussein,2019).
Almost every nation suffers from self-society conflict. Humans go through a period of socialization as social beings. In a society with many individuals and social institutions, there is a great deal of opportunity for social contact. It is possible to converse with an individual, a group of individuals, or even a group. People will begin to see distinctions between themselves due to their interactions. Societal strife is fueled by various factors, including, but not limited to, differences in religion, economy, and social class.

From the point of view of Van Dijk (1995), critical discourse analysis is a method of researching and investigating text and speech (as cited in Akbar & Nawal, 2019). Social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are all examined in this kind of discourse’s social and political situations (Gyollai, 2020). To put it simply, CDA goes beyond the awareness of discourse’s social aspects, according to Fairclough (1993). CDA’s central concept is to show how speech shapes and has shaped our community and how this, in turn, shapes our sense of self. It is important to remember that language does not exist in a vacuum, which is why CDA focuses on the interdependence between language and society. In CDA research, ideology is one of the most significant concepts. Ideology is divided into three parts: discourse, social cognition, and society. These three parts are intricately intertwined. As ideologies are discursively expressed and generated through discourse, speech serves as the socio-cognitive foundation for everyday manifestation and social replication. In other words, discourse helps to disseminate ideas and make them tangible (Van Dijk, 2006). The central tenet of CDA "draws heavily on social theories and seeks to develop a critically contextualized approach to linguistics which identifies issues of ideology, power, and inequality" (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 1).

Previous Studies

The issue of conflict was studied by many researchers. For instance, Yusuf (2018) examined the conflict resolutions in language use among leaders of agitating groups in Nigeria. This research aimed to discover how hate speech and stereotyping might incite inter-group strife via the power of human language. This was done by analyzing the chosen speeches by social group players based on speech act theory and socio-cognitive critical discourse analysis, respectively, to generate a conflict scenario. The study demonstrated that essential community members might use language as the standard semiotic system to maintain their self-interest, even if it does not benefit the larger population.

In 2019, Chernenko studied on the pragmatic peculiarities of the final phase of conflict interaction in fiction discourse. This study aimed to complete a theoretical framework of conflict discourse studies by revealing the pragmatic peculiarities of the final step in conflict fiction discourse, revealing gender peculiarities, and studying verbal and non-verbal means of communication in the use of linguistic means in the final step of conflict discourse. Methods in linguistic studies, including pragmatic and discourse analysis, were used in this work, as well as analysis and synthesis, induction, and deduction. The data were drawn from works by British and American authors from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The findings revealed three pragmatic sorts of communicative situations, from the perspectives of pragmatic, structural, and contextual values: separation, reconciliation, and accommodation of the speakers with elocutionary effect. Both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication were used to demonstrate gender differences in conflict speech. Verbally, male and female variations in conflict
communication were seen using emotional-evaluative vocabulary, taboo vocabulary, and qualifiers. Nonverbally, haptic communication, touch, smile, cry, voice quality, and eye contact had particular gender meanings.

Another study by Abustan (2020) focused on the conflict of the main character in Saroyan’s *The Human Comedy*. He studied the conflict the main character in the novel faced, explaining the many types of competition split into internal and external conflicts. This study analyzed the variance explained by the main character in the novel. To explore this research, the author took a structural approach which usually studies literary works by examining the intrinsic elements that make up the piece. The findings showed that most of the main character's problems were caused by the environment or external circumstances. Homer, the primary character minimizes his desires and prioritizes those around him. Then, he matured. With his patience and care, he grew into a responsible adult. The narrative teaches people how to be accountable in their daily lives.

These studies attempted to detect and explain the (linguistic) nature of conflict; still, a gap is identified in terms of (1) the lack of a contextual discursive interpretation of the strategies employed and (2) the failure to address the ideological premises embedded in producing discursive content. The current study has attempted to bridge this gap by investigating discursive strategies at the critical discourse analysis levels. Through a critical interpretation, the study intends to give a more comprehensive and contextualized understanding of how conflict is produced and used.

*The Handmaid’s Tale (1985)*

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* introduces readers to Gilead, a totalitarian religious state that values childbearing and gender hierarchy above everything else. Handmaids, Martha, and their wives are all under the thumb of Gilead, who uses religion to keep them in line. Flashbacks and memories of Offred's marriage, children, and captivity are utilized to tell the protagonist's tale. It's not uncommon for Gilead to pick up and retrain young, fertile women like Offred. Every month, they must perform a special ritual to sleep with their designated commander. They exist only to give wealthy couples who are unable to conceive children. Throughout *The Handmaid's Tale*, the corruption deepens. As she tries to find a way out of her new incarceration, she worries about the safety of both herself and her daughter, whom she wants to be reunited with.

**Method**

This study employs the socio-cognitive method of Van Dijk's discursive strategies (2006). The central critical perspective is Van Dijk's ideological square, which emphasizes (1) our good traits while concealing our bad ones and (2) their terrible qualities while concealing our bad ones (Van Dijk, 2006). For the qualitative analysis, the deployment of discursive strategies is explored at the critical discourse analysis levels, whereas the quantitative analysis will cover the frequency of the identified discursive strategy.

The ideological square is a term coined by Van Dijk. Positive self-presentation and negative other demonstration characteristics demonstrate not only how we dip into in-groups and out-groups, but also how we represent ourselves and others during conflict (Van Dijk, 2000). Van Dijk employs several discursive strategies to demonstrate how the ideological square may debate
in various contexts (Van Dijk, 2000, 2006; Ajiboye, 2013). Due to space constraints, only eight of these discursive strategies were thoroughly studied.

Discursive strategies are several linguistic tools employed by the speaker to capture the attention of the listening audience in the situation in which the message is communicated. The strategy of repetition uses to stress the argument and direct the audience's attention to the content of the utterance by using the same term, phrase, or sentence multiple times. There is a strong connection between these four ideological speech strategies: actor description, polarization, positive self-presentation, and negative other-presentation. Actor description refers to the depiction of discourse actors—individually, collectively, unfavorably, or positively—as represented. It is common for ideological debate to focus on us and them. Thus, actor description often corresponds with the discourse players' polarization into us and them groups, which embodies the positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation of the discourse actors. Topio refers to the apparent facts to back up an argument is known as self-evident reasoning. A metaphor is the invoking of a direct likeness between two items. An example strategy uses to provide concrete evidence in support of an argument (as cited in Aini, 2019).

**Research Procedures**

In this study, the CDA method will determine how self-society conflict is expressed in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The researchers set up the analysis following certain steps: First, after reading the novel several times, they identify where specific ideas about self-society conflict are hidden. Then, they choose from the extracted statements those that have a particular ideology and one or more of the critical discourse analysis strategies. The researchers put the extracts in their proper context and explain the textual or conceptual meaning: This has to do with how the language choices in each extract show a different point of view on the self-society conflict.

**Data Description**

Five written extracts are chosen for analysis from the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* which was released in 1985. English is the original language of the novel. The number of words varies, and they are taken from Margaret Atwood's book. The chosen extracts are (a) written texts and (b) representative of the issue of self-society conflict to qualify as analytical materials. The novel *The Handmaid's Tale* is chosen to portray the conflict of the handmaids in Gilead culture. The corpus of the study is depicted in the table one:

Table 1. **Corpus of analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Theme</th>
<th>N.of extracts</th>
<th>N. of words</th>
<th>Publication year</th>
<th>Text type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Society Conflict</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>290</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis

The data below explain the quantitative frequency of the discursive strategies in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The five extracts analyses reveal a moderate-to-high frequency of discursive strategies, as shown in Table two below.

Table 2. Distribution of discursive strategies in The Handmaid’s Tale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Strategies</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polarization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor Description</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexicalization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.75 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagueness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract 1

Aunt Lydia: They made such a mess of everything. They filled the air with chemicals, radiation, and poison! So, God whipped up a particular plague. The plague of infertility, as birthrates fell, made things worse. They were dirty women. They were slobs. But you are special, girls. Fertility is a gift given right by God. The world can be quite an ugly place. But we cannot wish that ugliness away. We cannot hide from that horror. (p.98)

Contextualization

The extract above notifies the character Aunt Lydia. She is one of the leading female characters who play a significant role in spreading the oppressive system of Gilead in this novel.

Linguistic Analysis

There are several discursive strategies in the above extract. The first is evident from the usage of the pronouns they in the utterance, *They made such a mess of everything* and we in the utterance, *we cannot wish that ugliness away* throughout the whole extract above, reflecting a sort of ideological polarization of the characters into an in-group (Handmaids) as she refers to them by the pronoun "we" and an out-group (Gilead’s women) as she refers to them by the pronoun they. This ideological polarization reflects the writer’s employment of the strategies of positive-self presentation and other-negative presentation. Another strategy is lexicalization. The character uses this strategy to represent something or someone positively or negatively. The use of negative lexical items such as dirty, worse, and sluts in this utterance, *They made things worse. They were dirty women. They were sluts* to represent Gilead’s women negatively. In contrast, using a positive lexical item such as "special" in the utterance *But you are special girls* represents the handmaid positively. Another discursive strategy is that of example and illustration. The character uses this strategy to provide evidence in support of an argument. It is evident in the following utterances, *They made such a mess of everything. They filled the air with chemicals, radiation, and poison! So, God whipped up a special plague, The Plague of Infertility*. The writer illustrates the cause that
makes Gilead’s women infertile. This is because they made such a mess, so God punished them. Repetition is another strategy used to make the reader focus on the content of the utterance by repeatedly using a similar word or phrase. This strategy is evident in these utterances, *They made such a mess of everything. They filled the air with chemicals, radiation, and poison.* Repetition strengthens what the character says. The word “they” is repeatedly mentioned echoing the negative other presentation of women in Gilead society.

**Extract 2**
Offred: Sterile, there is no such thing as a sterile man anymore, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren. That's the law. (p.61)

**Contextualization**
Offred narrates this extract to exhibit her philosophy of reflecting the polarization system enforced by Gilead between women and men.

**Linguistic Analysis**

The main character in the extract above, Offred, expresses self-social conflict when the law of Gilead society represents another example of how society uses women as scapegoats. The strategy of lexicalization is evident in the extract above through the use of the negative lexical items sterile and barren in the utterance, *Sterile, there is no such thing as a sterile man anymore and women who are barren, that is the law* which reflects the theme of self-society conflict among women in Gilead society. Offred finds herself struggling against the totalitarian restrictions of her society. The use of lexicalization refers to women as the outgroup, contributing to the negative representation of women in Gilead society. Negative adjective is used here to represent women negatively, while men are portrayed positively to reflect the ideology of racism that dominates Gilead society. The use of the positive word fruitful reflects how the handmaids portrayed while the negative term barren reflects how Gilead women are performed negatively, reflecting the strategy of actor description and how the characters in this novel describe either positively or negatively.

**Extract 3**
Offred: I used to think of my body as an instrument of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will... Now the flesh arranges itself differently. I'm a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is harder and more real than I am and glows red within its translucent wrapping. (p.73)

**Contextualization**
Offred narrates this extract. She rests in the bath. She compares how she used to think about her body and how she does it today.

**Linguistic analysis**

Many strategies are identified in the extract above. These strategies use by the main character to reflect conflict with society. Metaphorical process is apparent in the utterance, *I used to think of my body as an instrument. Now the flesh arranges itself differently* through which Offred compares her body to a device of her desire before Gilead, but now she is just a mound of flesh
surrounding a womb. Offred expresses her self-conflict because she realizes Gilead’s attitude toward women, which treats them not as individuals but as objects important only for the children they can bear. Offred uses the strategy of lexicalization. The use of harmful items such as cloud, congealed, and hard reflects Offred’s conflict that there are no human values in Gilead society. Gilead society treats them as nothing more than bare children. Topoi is another discursive strategy used to depict self-society conflict. Women of different types experience abuse. Topoi is diverse in women’s discourse, as seen in this utterance, \textit{I used to think of my body as an instrument of pleasure or a means of transportation}. Domestic violence against women spans from sexual deprivation to physical and psychological assault. Diversity of the abuse topoi in women’s discourse strengthens the negative other presentation.

\textbf{Extract 4}
Offred: These men, we have been told, are like war criminals. It is no excuse that what they did was legal at the time: their crimes are retroactive. They have committed atrocities and must be made into examples for the rest, though this is hardly needed. No woman in her right mind, these days, would seek to prevent a birth, should she be so lucky as to conceive. (p.201)

\textbf{Contextualization}
This extract narrates by Offred when she wants to portray how men in Gilead society dominate women.

\textbf{Linguistic Analysis}
There is solid ideological polarization regarding the description of the participants in this extract. Ideological polarization is formulated through, on the one hand, the use of the pronoun ‘we’ to emphasize the positive self-image of in-groups (women). On the other hand, the pronoun ‘they’ refers to the out-groups (men). Ideological polarization of participants is figured out through the negative lexical items the writer uses to describe men as a source of threat: war criminals and atrocities, which in turn reflect the ideology of criminalization. In the utterances, \textit{their crimes are retroactive and, they should be so lucky as to conceive} denote that the writer emphasizes her negative opinion about men as she mentions the words their crimes are retroactive. The adjective retroactive refers to men as the out-groups contribute to the negative other-representation of men. At the same time, women are described with a positive adjective denoted throughout the word lucky, which serves the positive self-presentation of the in-group. The character uses the metaphorical expression in this utterance, \textit{These men, we have been told, are like war criminals} to highlight the discursive strategy metaphor. The strategy is clear when men (doctors) who perform abortions are compared to war criminals.

\textbf{Extract 5}
Offred: There are other women with baskets, some in red, some in the dull green of the Marthas, some in the striped dresses, red and blue and green and cheap and skimpy, that mark the women of the poorer men. Econowives, they are called. They have to do everything they can.(p.306)

\textbf{Contextualization}
Offred, narrates this extract. Offred describes the women in Gilead society according to their dresses. Women are classified by color: red Handmaids, blue Wives, and green Marthas.
**Linguistic Analysis**

This extract is rich in discursive strategies. The strategy of vagueness is the first strategy that appears in this extract. The strategy is evident through the use of the word some. By using the word some in the utterance, some in red, *some in the dull green of the Marthas, some in the striped dresses*, the speaker does not specify an exact number of women. The other discursive strategy is the ideological polarization in which the handmaids are represented as the out-groups through the pronoun they in the utterance, *They have to do everything; if they can.* The strategy of actor description utilizes to describe the participants positively or negatively by using negative adjectives such as cheap and skimpy, and the handmaids negatively related, contributing to expressing the ideology of negative representation. The repetition strategy uses by the writer or the speaker to emphasize the argument and make the reader focus on the content. The strategy is evident in these utterances, *some in red, some in the dull green of the Marthas, and some in the striped dresses.* By repeating the same word some. It shows that the same word is repeatedly mentioned to convince her argument about the problem and to make readers focus on the content.

**Discussion**

The analysis in this study attempts to fill the gap highlighted in previous studies. The previous research as mentioned above, did not sufficiently pay attention to social contextual interpretations, resulting in little consideration of the theme of conflict’s ideological reasons. In terms of the investigated self-society conflict, the current study has provided more comprehensive conclusions. The quantitative findings provided an overview of the variety and frequency of the critical discourse analysis and discursive strategies used in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The qualitative research included deconstructed analytical reflections on what and how ideology entrenches in *The Handmaid's Tale*, as well as a closer look at the ideological reasons.

Critical discourse analysis has been utilized to answer two research questions the first of which was: *What are the discursive strategies used in the novel The Handmaid's Tale to construct positive or negative representation?*. In the book *The Handmaid's Tale*, discursive strategies were seen in moderate to high abundance. In terms of the conflict theme addressed, these strategies played a significant role in the discourse of *The Handmaid's Tale*. The handmaid dispute employed the highest frequency of the polarization strategy, whereas lexicalization employed the second highest frequency of strategies. Repetition, actor description, and metaphor appeared to be the third most widely used strategies. Finally, an example, topoi, and vagueness appeared with the smallest number of strategy.

The second research question was: *How are these strategies implemented?* was addressed in light of the previous analysis, which provided a contextualized explanation of the inherent ideological polarity. *The Handmaid's Tale* may attempt to influence lay readers' mindsets to transform, re-present, and re-affirm their surrounding social reality. This is accomplished by communicating a favorable portrayal of oneself in contrast to a negative presentation of the other. This polarization was portrayed within critical discourse analysis and discursive strategies. Furthermore, *The Handmaid's Tale* may seek to create and sustain an intellectual hegemony of chosen social realities.
Conclusion

The present study has attempted to accomplish the study aim at the level of critical discourse analysis by expressing the ideological polarization of a positive representation of the handmaid's self versus a negative presentation of the other. In the scope of the data, ideological polarization was constructed in terms of pronouns and adjectives that reflect positive-self and negative-other representations. The macrostructure level revealed by the character's use of discursive strategies and ideological functions showed the reality of the struggle between the character and society. Based on the findings of this study, these characters' remarks are divided into two categories; those that promote positive self-presentation and those that promote negative other-presentation. The in-group and the out-group are good examples of how these strategies function. The writer uses them to demonstrate how patriarchal most nations' constitutions are and how women are still treated as second-class citizens in society. We/us vs. them/them polarization and lexicalization strategies, as well as positive and negative representation strategies are used to illustrate this idea. The closeness of these two levels shows the self-society conflict theme. The importance of these two levels of analysis can be observed in this research since they demonstrate how gender disparity occurs in our society. Handmaids in Gileads society show to be subject to gender inequity, identity conflict, and the struggle between self and the rest of the community by using macro-level several discursive strategies to portray the conflict in The Handmaid's Tale, including polarization, actor description, metaphor, repetition, vagueness, and example/illustration. The microstructure is evident by using these strategies.

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Fostering Students' Speaking Ability through English Club Activities

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Abstract
This research aimed to describe a Community Language Learning (CLL) program, the English Club (E-Club), activities and their impacts to enhance the students’ speaking ability. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method. To gather the data, the researchers administered questionnaires to twenty-seven eleventh-grade students who participated in the E-Club at Public Vocational High School (SMKN) 1 Sooko, Malang, East Java, Indonesia. Then, the researchers interviewed five students and one teacher to expand on the information received. The data analysis operated were gathering data, displaying data, and drawing conclusions. The research's data reliability was checked through data triangulation. The findings showed that E-Club activities were speech, storytelling, group discussion, and reading aloud. Following the implementation of these activities, the students’ speaking abilities including grammatical accuracy, vocabulary mastery, pronunciation ability, fluidity, and ability to organize concept in speaking had increased. Moreover, students experienced low anxiety and possessed higher English learning interest. These positive impacts were resulted by the role of teacher to prepare suitable teaching methods and to create positive learning environment. Henceforth, this research urges the importance of planning before implementing English program and adopting similar activities to escalate students’ speaking ability.

Keywords: community language learning, E-Club, speaking ability, speaking activities

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Introduction

Students' success in mastering learning output is linked to their learning methodology. Therefore, teachers play a vital role in facilitating students with motivation and guidance in the learning process. The teacher's selection of the appropriate teaching approach is crucial in students’ pedagogical abilities, learning awareness, and the development of emotional capacities concerning their social circumstances (Surahman & Sofyan, 2021; Vin-Mbah, 2012). The ultimate purpose of learning English is to increase an individual's capability to communicate and construct knowledge to process information easily.

There are several methods to improve your English mastering abilities today; one of them is to join an English Club (E-Club), which is generally a designated opportunity for students who want to learn and engage more in English with their schoolmates as an extra activity outside the classroom (Azoua, 2020; Khikmiah, 2011). E-Club is a community language learning (CLL)-based learning process that depends on language training and accustoming in assisting students in improving their capabilities. In line with CLL which plays a role as a learning approach by involving students to be participants of a language assemblage and sharing their language understanding by engaging with others (Nurhasanah, 2015). CLL's strength is in the way it places a focus on learning as a complete individual, on the role of a helpful and non-judgmental instructor, and on the transfer of responsibilities and duties for learning to the students itself (Surahman & Sofyan, 2021). In addition to this, CLL places an emphasis not only on the linguistic aspects of language study, but also on the more humanistic and philosophical aspects of the process of acquiring a second language. This goes beyond simply highlighting the advantages of a teaching approach centered on the student (Nurhasanah, 2015).

Halimah (2018) believes that CLL strengthens the relationships between and among the students in the classroom. The students are able to acquire new knowledge not just through their connection to one another but also from the ways in which they engage with the instructor. In addition to this, the Community Language Learning technique has the potential to motivate students to share their thoughts with the rest of the class. It takes place as a result of CLL being concerned with their sense of sight and being able to be seen by them. Students are provided with assistance to help them develop their self-motivation, which is the expectation that they would study English for their own pleasure and personal knowledge. Students' motivation to use the English they just have produced may be increased and increased via participation in community language clubs (Yuliandasari & Kusriandi, 2018). Therefore, it is required of English instructors that they would give many chances for learners to speak English over the course of the education process in regular courses.

Beside several benefits on CLL method, Saepuloh (2017) revealed in his study regarding the use of CLL in teaching speaking, he discovered three shortcomings that the researcher identified in Community Language Learning. The researcher observed these shortcomings. First, the CLL technique is likely to give students with a low difficulty grade of learning, and second, the effectiveness of this approach is mostly dependent on the instructor's feedback in their capacity as a tutor. Then, the assessment exam to figure out the development that students make may be more complex to conduct than in a typical classroom setting that does not employ this type of instruction. He also stated that problems experienced by some students when attempting to improve their speaking skills via Cll. For example, owing to a limitation of vocabulary and a
comprehension of how sentences are structured, it might be challenging for students to choose a subject for a speaking exercise and convey their thoughts and ideas. Because of their inadequate vocabularies, sentence structures, and overall language skills, students struggle to respond spontaneously to the lecturer's instructions or additional information. This is the second flaw in the system. In addition, the students have insufficient opportunities to practice public speaking and have their opinions accommodated. In addition to this, they struggle to choose appropriate learning resources and materials for each session as well as to comprehend the information that the instructor presents.

E-Club is a learning approach that provides various values in terms of developing students' language acquisition skills. Several studies have been carried out that demonstrated that this strategy allows students to play a larger part in their learning growth (Hayatinufus, 2018; Nurhasanah, 2015). Zulhemindra (2018) stated that this approach generates relationships between students; they may gain knowledge through their relationships and interactions with one another, and so forth their interactions with the teacher. It can also increase students' enthusiasm to express their thoughts in the teaching process. It occurs as a result of CLL being concerned with their visual sense and being visible to them. These variables contribute to students' increased confidence in using English during their daily interactions (Wulandari et al., 2016). The key aim behind the emergence of extracurricular programs like English clubs is to make it easier for students to cultivate motivation and enthusiasm in English language study, as well as to provide spaces in which this may take place. The students have the choice to participate or not in the activity. The objective of the English club program that is run at the school is to provide students with opportunities to improve their English skills, particularly their capacity to communicate in English. In addition, the students have a greater amount of time to study English, in contrast to the restricted amount of time they receive in their normal classes (Hamadameen & Najim, 2020).

Furthermore, the environment provided in an enjoyable and stress-free English club boosts students' enthusiasm in studying, allowing them to attain effective learning outcomes, and ease them in organizing ideas for speaking (Fitriany et al., 2021). Despite their lack of speaking abilities, they were no longer afraid to present their opinions. They made new acquaintances discuss their experiences with, which might boost their self-esteem. Finally, students believe they have improved in their Pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency (Melviza et al., 2017; Pereira et al., 2013). As a result, participating in English club may be quite advantageous for students in improving their linguistic or nonlanguage skills. After being engaged in the activities of the English club, the students became more helpful. While they are there, they will increase the depth and breadth of their knowledge and competence. Furthermore, as long as they continue to study and practice, their English will vastly improve, and they will have a far greater chance of achieving higher levels of success in the future (Cheng, 2019; Elnadeef & Abdala, 2019). Additionally, Kardiansyah & Qodriani (2018) conducted a study on English Extracurricular Activities and the Role They Play in Improving Students' Ability to Communicate in English. The findings demonstrated that English Outside the Classroom plays a vital role in assisting students in improving their English abilities. It features a few aspects that help promote and impact the members' second language learning. After then, the activities of the English club have a crucial effect on its members' academic achievement. According to the results of their speaking classes, it is possible to observe that most of them are able to get class scores that are higher than their average.
from the earliest stages of the odd semester to the conclusion of the even semester for the academic year. It is being considered as a viable option to help students enhance their English skills.

Meanwhile, according to some other studies, the learning approach in the form of a language learning community has certain drawbacks that should be highlighted. Cheng (2019) stated that the fundamental issue with English club activities is the recurrence of topics that did not intrigue the students' enthusiasm. The low quality of the programs reduces student involvement. Furthermore, the club's dissolution is becoming more probable due to a lack of discipline and a reduction in membership. This scenario has arisen because of a lack of planning for club events. The compatibility of the topic and the following actions must be examined. The plan and texts must be suitable and follow the activities' goals. This will assist students in comprehending the purpose and outcome of the activities (Hijrah & Umar, 2021).

Regarding prior literature on the benefits and limitations of adopting the CLL method in teaching English, this study intends to investigate the influence of activities in E-Club on enhancing students' speaking skills. As a result, the research problems may be classified into two parts:

1. What activities do the E-Club program at SMKN 1 Sooko have to do with strengthening students' speaking abilities?
2. How do English club activities lead to the enhancement of students' speaking abilities?

Literature Review

Speaking in General

Speaking is the act of constructing meaning via the use of spoken and non-spoken signs, in a range of different circumstances and then conveying that meaning with other people. According to Bouzar (2019), speaking is an activity to share feelings andodings with the means of spoken language. Aside from the abilities of writing, listening, and reading, it is regarded to be one of the most challenging aspects of learning a foreign language. Based on Thornbury (2005) speaking has two primary functions: the first is a transactional function, and the second is an informational function. When we refer to speaking as a transactional function, we imply that it is either to transmit the sort of information that we wish to communicate with another person or to enable the trade of goods with that person. An expanded kind of responsive language is known as the transactional function. This form of language is used for the purpose of giving or exchanging information. The majority of the time, it occurs in our lives while we are assisting one another. Either we have to borrow something from someone else, or we are in desperate need of someone's assistance (Terrell & Brown, 1981).

The second kind of function is an interpersonal one. When we speak to others as part of our informational function, it indicates that we cultivate and maintain social interactions or relationships with good intentions with other people. The informational functions of communication are more concerned with the maintenance of social connections than they are with the transmission of information or facts. On the other hand, individuals talk for a variety of purposes. Being social is one of the most important ones. People will be able to develop positive social relationships with one another if they have the opportunity to socialize in a communal setting. If they have a great one, it will be much simpler for them to deal with the challenges that
come with living their everyday lives as human beings who coexist in various ways (Terrell & Brown, 1981).

Sentence construction, vocabulary mastery, clear articulation, and fluidity are all important aspects of speaking. The first aspect deals with grammar. It is essential for kids to have this ability so that they can construct the appropriate phrase while speaking. Heaton (1990) continued by saying that the student's capacity to modify structure and to differentiate proper grammatical form from inappropriate one was also important. Understanding the proper approach to acquire proficiency in a language, whether orally or in written form, requires the use of good sentence construction based on grammatical rules.

Brown (2004) breaks effective speaking abilities down into five distinct areas. The first kind is known as imitating others' speech. When a student is working at an imitative level, it is generally already obvious what they are attempting to accomplish. At this stage, the student's goal is to just repeat what has been spoken to them in a manner that can be comprehended and with some degree of conformity to the pronunciation that has been established by the instructor. One example of this kind of assignment is the repositioning of words. the following stage is Intensive speaking entails using a limited quantity of words in a highly controlled environment. A basic example would be reading aloud a piece or responding directly to a simple inquiry. This sort of activity includes read aloud tasks and simple and basic dialogue.

The subsequent step is responsive reading, which is somewhat more sophisticated than intense reading, although the distinction is, to say the least, hazy. During this level, the dialogue consists of a basic query and two follow-up questions. This is shown by the Q&A format, which provides guidance and direction. The fourth phase is intensive speaking, which is typically more personal than transactional in nature. Interpersonal communication refers to sustaining connections. Examples include interviews, roleplaying, and conversation. The last category is extensive communication, and in this case, a monolog of some form is common. Examples of this kind of communication does not generally entail improvisation since it requires a significant amount of preparation. The example that will be used in this recounting of the narrative.

It is possible to draw the following conclusion definitions that was just presented: the capacity to talk is very significant. People have to speak to one another and interact with one another to obtain information. Speaking can be used for a wide variety of purposes, including discussion, engagement, commerce, performance, convincing other people, and exchanging information, knowledge, and ideas with one another. It is incredibly beneficial in many different contexts, like our association, social settings, and many more.

**English Club as an Extracurricular**

A group of individuals that has been organized with a structure, a mission, rules, and procedures, as well as student leadership, is referred to as a school club or organization. The members have the same objective and the same ability, passion, and willingness to work continuously on their projects in order to achieve their goals. Elnadeef and Abdala (2019) stated the purposes of E-Club are as follows: Creating a friendly atmosphere in which participants can practice their spoken English without feeling self-conscious, expanding participants' vocabularies and enhancing their use of idiomatic expressions, identifying and addressing participants' most
common errors in spoken English and/or pronunciation, boosting participants' self-assurance in their ability to communicate effectively in English, and providing participants with the opportunity to hone a variety of listening and speaking skills in a situation that simulates real-world situations are the goals of English club.

Some various groups or communities may be joined based on a wide variety of interests. One of them would be the English community, which we also sometimes refer to as the English club. English club is a collection of individuals that shares the same interest in English. The vast majority of educators are aware that leaving the classroom entirely is the most effective way to foster dialogue among students. The limitations of the classroom may be alleviated via the cultivation of favorable conditions for learning; one example of such a setting is the E-Club (Arum, 2018).

Methods

The purpose of this research is to acquire data on e-club activities and their impact on the students’ development of speaking abilities in Public Vocational High School (SMKN) 1 Sooko, Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The qualitative descriptive approach was employed to investigate and grasp the meaning of individuals and communities affected by social or human problems, with the researcher serving as the key instrument. The researcher defined how activities occurred naturally by adopting this design. The researcher was the primary instrument in this procedure. Furthermore, this data was analyzed inductively by some examination called triangulation, followed by analysis and conclusion.

The research participants were categorized into two groups: English instructor who became tutor at SMKN 1 Sooko's E-Club, and 27 of 11th-grade students who became members of the E-Club. The 11th graders were chosen because they took longer to join the E-Club than students in the grades beneath them. So that their perspectives and experiences are more varied, and they may contribute a large amount of data for this study. Due to the current global pandemic, data was obtained utilizing two methods: online questionnaires by using Guttman scale to avoid ambiguity appeared through Google Form and online interviews via WhatsApp and Google Meet. Following the completion of the questionnaire, 5 students were chosen at random to be interviewed to further the data collection. The data was subsequently be processed in multiple steps as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), including compressing data, presenting data, and generating conclusions from all of the collected data.

Results

The present research was aimed to scrutinize the English Club (E-Club) activities and their impacts to enhance students’ speaking ability. Therefore, the results of this research were presented following the objectives of the research.

English Club (E-Club) Activities

To obtain the data, the questionnaire administration and interviews to both teacher and students were conducted. According to the results of questionnaire administration, the English Club activities that the students joined are described in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 1. E-Club Activities that the Students’ Joined
Table 1 shows that story telling activity became the most favorite E-Club activity joined by the students with the proof that it had 100% students’ participation. Then, it was followed by the second favorite activities namely speech, reading aloud as the third, and group discussion in the fourth place. The percentage of the students’ participation on each E-Club activity would represent their agreement on the impact of the activity to enhance their English speaking ability. Then, the more detail results of the quantitative calculation supported by the interview results and the description of the activities would be presented in the following subthemes.

**Speech**

Based on the questionnaire administration (see Table 1), it was found that twenty-seven students had filled out the questionnaire and 93% students responded “yes” to show their agreement upon the ability of speech activity to enhance their English speaking ability. Only two students or 7% of respondents thought in different way as shown in Figure 1. They thought that speech activity might not contribute to the enhancement of their English speaking ability. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the respondents agree that speech activities in E-Club have significant impact on students’ speaking skill improvement.

![Figure 1. Speech as an activity to improve students’ speaking ability](image)

The students’ perception on the impact of speech activity to escalate their speaking ability was based on the activities they did during the speech preparation, application, and evaluation under the guidance of the E-Club teacher. The teacher provides two types of speech activities during the teaching. The first is the students' prepared speech using the tutor's material. The
students were instructed to comprehend the text and take notes on the key point of each paragraph of the speech. After that, students are expected to be able to expand on it using their own words. Then came a speech was written by the students themselves. The students were instructed to create their speeches in this section. They were allowed to pick and write on whatever topics they wished. The teacher (T) explained,

“I normally employ two strategies while training a speech. The first is that I offer them my writing, and the next is that the students create their text.”

Then, after that, there was a speech that the students had written themselves. In this section, the students were given the opportunity to write their own content. They were allowed to choose the topics that interested them, as well as write freely on those topics. The students had the opportunity to practice speaking in front of a group through these exercises. The instructor and the students saw the performance after that. Following that, the instructor and the other students provide feedback and ideas about the performance of the pupils. The instructor also provided suggestions and adjustments on the student's pronunciation. The students had both the opportunity and the experience to speak in front of other people as a result of participating in these events. In addition to this, it boosted the students' self-esteem. It also helped students improve their abilities in bringing together the concepts that would be delivered in their speeches. Students 1, 2, and 4 (S1, S2, and S4) stated:

“We are typically told not to be driven by text when practicing speaking. As a result, we use our phrases, which are not always the same as the text. Following our performance, the teacher gives us feedback on our look and pronunciation.”

**Story Telling**

The second E-Club activity that the students joined was story telling activity. This activity became the most chosen by all students to admit that story telling could improve their English speaking ability with 100% agreement (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Story telling as an activity to improve students’ speaking ability](image)

In the implementation of story telling activity, the students were needed to find a narrative story to equip them before the story telling performance. They were given the freedom to make
the tale as intriguing as they saw fit. This was made to create the plot more understandable. During their preparation before the performance, students learnt about grammar as well as narrative in this exercise. The teacher (T) stated:

“Students will learn grammar through this practice. Students are first required to look for narrative text. Following that, students must identify the grammatical and ideas in each sentence of the text. Understanding the text's subject matter might make it easier for students to recount a narrative. The students are then instructed to keep in mind the passage. The students are then invited to retell a narrative to their classmates.”

When students did a retelling of the narrative in front of the class, they occasionally made errors. Mispronouncing was usually the most common mistake. In this case, the teacher did not interrupt their performance in the middle of it. The teacher provided feedback on their performance when it was completed. This exercise would also encourage other students to concentrate on listening and comprehending the context of their friend's presentation. They were then invited to offer feedback and criticism on their friends' performances.

The instructor once held a poll for the students to participate in a competition for telling stories. The students requested that the recounting of their tale be done to the best of their abilities. After that, the instructor would decide which option was superior. It was shown via the conversation with the student who served as the respondent (S2):

“This exercise is often utilized as a competition amongst classes each year, similar to a class meeting. As a result, each student submits one representative to compete. If there is an outside competition, the instructor normally selects one of the top students from the English club to compete.”

**Group Discussion**

The third E-Club activity implemented by students was Group Discussion. The results of the questionnaire administration regarding to this activity is depicted in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Group discussion as an activity to improve students’ speaking ability](image)

According to students, group discussion was also an interesting activity implemented in E-Club. However, it was not as popular as speech and storytelling. It can be shown in Figure 3 by...
A total of 27 respondents who filled out the online questionnaire, there were 21 (78%) respondents stated “agree” toward group discussion method in E-Club to foster their speaking skill, and 6 respondents (22%) stated disagree. Students found that group discussion was interesting activity since everyone had fun through listening others’ amazing thoughts. Moreover, it is frequently held outdoors and it made more relaxing situation. The students were then separated into groups. They frequently talk about intriguing issues. They may review the day's assessment of their E-Club activities or express their ideas. Students 3 and 5 (S3 and S5) stated:

“The majority of discussion activities take place outside of the classroom. We were then separated into many groups, each of which discussed a different topic. We also communicate their amazing thoughts on occasion.”

**Reading Aloud**

The last activity that was implemented in the English Club (E-Club) was reading aloud. There were 24 or 89% students considered this activity to give benefit to improve their English speaking ability. While the other three students (11%) thought that reading aloud could not enhance their English speaking ability (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4. Reading aloud as an activity to improve students’ speaking ability](image)

Describing the implementation of reading aloud activity, the instructor asked the students to read the previously assigned material. After that, the students read the assigned material out loud. Reading aloud to students may inspire them to read on their own. Their comprehension of the word was also increased as a result of this activity. In addition to that, reading aloud was utilized as a method to prepare students who would be participating in a contest. The students' ability to communicate fluently improved as a result of this. The objective was to get the students ready for the activities that would include learning. The following may be shown through the interview with the student serving as the respondent (S3):
"We were instructed to read the text out loud while paying close attention throughout the reading material. When we mispronounce the words, the instructor will also provide feedback on our pronunciation."

The researcher, who was also the students' lecturer, began the process of teaching speaking towards the students by integrating reading aloud by first instructing them to get a significant amount of practice reading English textbooks out loud, not only on the school circumstances but also at their own homes. This instruction was given so that the students would have the opportunity to improve their speaking skills in both environments.

**The Impact of E-Club Activities on Students' Speaking Ability**

The second research problem that would be answered was about knowing the impact of E-Club activities to the students’ speaking ability enhancement. Based on the data gathered from the interview, there were several contributions to E-Club programs that aided in the improvement of students’ speaking abilities. The activities of the E-Club at the school exposed some impacts to the students. Students claimed that the E-Club activities gain better grammatical accuracy, fluidity in speaking due to frequent reading practices, vocabulary mastery, and confidence to speak in front of audience. Those conditions following S1 and S2 statements which underlined positive sides in his English mastery because of joining E-Club:

"I've gotten a lot of benefits since joining this club. For example, at an E-club activity, I may develop my speaking abilities by studying grammatical material and reading phrases in English often. There's also a storytelling game that helps you learn new words. There are more practices than the material at the E-club, such as speech and storytelling, so I have a lot of opportunities to enhance my speaking abilities as well as my bravery to speak English."

The E-club's contribution to boosting students' speaking abilities was also discovered to be mastering vocabulary. The students found words all over the place here. It might also be the words of their classmates, their teacher's explanation, or from other texts. The students also become accustomed to playing vocabulary-related activities. They enjoyed playing the games while learning a new language. It helped them obtain a lot and learn to talk as well. Further, through participating in a variety of activities, the students improved their pronunciation skills. In the assessment part, the tutor corrected the student's performance and provided examples of the proper pronunciation upon the student's incorrect pronunciation. The students were then taught to accurately repeat a few words. All of the students in this study feel that their pronunciation has improved since actively participating in E-club activities.

All of the participants of the English Club in SMKN 1 Sooko, Malang, East Java, Indonesia would probably agree that it was very beneficial for them to become members of the English Club (E-Club). They participate in a variety of speaking practices exercises, which was one of the ways that the activities in English clubs assist people improve their English language skills. If students wished to be able to speak English fluently, they should be able to properly pronounce words, employ the right patterns of stress and intonation, and talk in linked discourse. Because the audience would not understand our thoughts if we do not talk smoothly, the ability to communicate fluently is very essential.
Discussion

The discussion part would scrutinize both the E-Club activities and their impact to the students’ English speaking ability with the theories as well as studies in literature review. According to the previous studies, as stated by Harmer (Harmer, 2007) There were numerous common types of speaking activities that might be utilized to improve speaking abilities. Acting from a text included things like play scripts, conversation, speeches, oral presentations, etc. Then, in the present study, the E-Club activities that were implemented in the school were speech, story telling, group discussion, and reading aloud. In E-Club, speech required students to be confidence, be prepared with ideas, and ready to perform in front of the audience for a short time. The students’ speech performance could be medium for them to share thoughts and ideas with another via the use of words (Jannah et al., 2020). Following up the speech activity, the teacher’s feedback on the students’ performance could improve students’ pronunciation accuracy.

Similar with the speech, story telling activity also required students to practice sharing ideas and information to other people. However, story telling requested the storyteller to employ his or her imagination in retelling the story. As (2016) stated that storytelling is an oral exercise in which the narrative is constructed in the imagination through discussion between the storyteller and the listener in a range of situations. Storytelling is one of the fun strategies that learners may utilize to improve their English language skills. People use tales to share their experiences, comprehend others' experiences, free their imaginations, and make sense of things and their purpose within it.

Reflecting the story telling activity, the students were asked to analyze the narratives that they were selected from any sources i.e book, internet, magazine, etc. The analyses included the grammar, the vocabulary, and the structure of the paragraph. Therefore, according to the teachers’ observation on students’ English speaking ability improvement, the students obtained better grammar accuracy, vocabulary mastery, and narrative theory pedagogy.

Compared to speech and story telling activities, group discussion provided more relax learning environment which further served more positive impacts to students’ English speaking ability. As stated by Harmer (2007) unscripted discussion activities allowed students to talk freely without feeling obligated to stick to the theme. Group discussions aided students by increasing the quantity of speech for each student, boosting collaboration and bargaining, and serving as a rehearsal to improve students' problem-solving abilities. Group discussion not only increased the students' speaking abilities through requiring them to communicate with others in the group, but it also developed students' collaboration and courage. In addition, group discussion had a great influence on the academic sector and offered students leadership and comprehension skills. They were taught how to arrange, organize, and develop a community in order to attain collective goals (Pereira et al., 2013).

Discussing the fourth E-Club activity, reading aloud had also showed a chase positive impact to the students English speaking ability. The E-Club teacher believed that making reading English textbook into routine activity would give many benefits, including elevating students speaking ability. Through reading, students would possess enough information as source of speaking, would be trained to articulate ideas more often to prepare speaking fluently, and would be ready with better pronunciation as they listened to their reading aloud. It is in line with Supraba et al. (2020)
which stated that reading aloud can be an effective way to accustom students with English words and pronunciation.

The four E-Club activities discussed, all of them provided positive impacts to students’ English speaking ability. The different percentages appeared in Table 1 represented students’ freedom to choose the best E-Club activity which were more suitable with their learning styles and interests. Also, the teacher’s role to provide supportive learning environment by planning E-Club teaching methods such as going indoor and outdoor, designing E-Club with material prepared and students’ own material development, as well as providing serious and more relax speaking practices, successfully aided students to improve their English speaking ability. Finally, this research implied the importance of planning before implementing English program and adopting similar activities to escalate students’ speaking ability.

Conclusion

The present research aimed to analyzed the E-Club activities and their impacts to the students’ English speaking ability. According to the findings, there were four activities that students joined in E-Club, namely speech, storytelling, reading aloud, and group discussion. However, the most chosen activity that students considered effective to enhance their English speaking ability was story telling activity with 100% students’ responses of agreement. During the implementation of E-Club activities, the role of the teacher was pivotal in order to design best method and provide more supportive learning environment to aid students’ English speaking performance. Consequently, many positive impacts as characteristics of students’ English speaking ability improvement appeared. The characteristics were the increasing of students’ grammatical accuracy, vocabulary mastery, pronunciation ability, speaking fluidity, and ability to organize concept in speaking had increased. Moreover, students experienced low anxiety and possessed higher English learning interest. Therefore, this research recommend educational institution and teachers to consider well-planning and providing supportive learning environment as important points prior English program implementation.

This research provides theoretical implication as it enriches knowledge related to the establishment of English Club (E-Club) through community language learning (CLL) model. Also, it gives practical implications as the teachers or institutions outside of this research context to adapt the implementation of E-Club activities to enhance their students’ English speaking ability. However, due to the limited context and participants of this research, more extensive study of similar or different community language learning (CLL) model will be preferable.

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Facebook Movie-Based Discussions: Bringing Down Intercultural Barriers in English Language Education

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Abstract
The paper’s main aim is to highlight the importance of underpinning English language education with intercultural competence. The authors describe and analyze the experience of the cross-cultural exchange in Facebook movie-based discussions as an innovative approach to English teacher preparation in Ukraine. The study examines the perceptions of American films regarding various social, educational, and cultural issues by American and Ukrainian participants. The authors address the following questions: 1. What are the intercultural differences in the perception of American movies manifested by the representatives of the American and Ukrainian cultures during movie club discussions? 2. What are the participants’ attitudes to online discussions in a Facebook group? The research engages 83 participants, including university professors, their family members, and prospective teachers majoring in teaching English as a foreign language. The study applies Hofstede’s cultural dimensions model and descriptive, comparative, and qualitative methods. Since the research is empirical and an exciting outcome of international academic collaboration in teacher preparation, its findings have proven the significance of cross-cultural communication for educational purposes. The emphasis on strengthening English language teacher preparation with intercultural awareness, values, and skills for service in the multicultural world has evident benefits for the quality of teacher training in the Ukrainian context. The research also signifies Facebook as a platform for future online educational collaboration.

Keywords: cross-cultural differences in values perceptions, English as a foreign language, Facebook movie-based discussion, intercultural competence, movie club, Ukrainian context

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Introduction

Over the past decade, globalization has affected the higher education system, creating favorable conditions for students and academics mobility, cross-cultural delivery courses, international curricula, and multinational collaboration (Powell et al., 2014). The new assets to English teacher preparation in Ukraine contribute to developing cultural awareness, which facilitates the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication. The Council of Europe (2001) requires the integration of cultural competence in language teaching.

While a part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was denied the opportunity of familiarizing itself with the cultures of the peoples situated on the other side of the Iron Curtain; thus, it lacked access to live communication with foreigners, to studying their values and traditions (Matvienko & Kuzmina, 2020). Learning a foreign language outside the language and cultural environment was like learning to swim in a pool without any water. Although Ukraine gained its political independence in 1991, the Ukrainians still often view other cultures through their own cultural lenses, which may inevitably lead to misconceptions and stereotypes, which is inappropriate when training teachers of foreign languages. Accordingly, insufficient knowledge of the values of other cultures can result in cultural misunderstandings, ineffective communication, and even hostile national movements (Yezhitskaya, 2011).

Empirical studies demonstrate a low level of intercultural competence of foreign language teachers resulting in a lack of motivation to teach the students culture and the foreign language. Consequently, preparing students to understand cultural differences, treating other cultures respectfully, and avoiding harmful stereotypes require more attention to the preparation of teachers capable of instilling an interest in and respect for diversity (Perova, 2010). To address the issue with deserved scrutiny, English teacher education in Ukraine seeks innovative instruments for developing intercultural awareness in intending teachers to bridge the gap between the curriculum requirements and the actual situation.

Since the paper intends to describe the experience of cross-cultural exchange in Facebook movie-based discussions, the authors analyze the responses to social and educational issues and values perceptions by the representatives of American and Ukrainian cultures. The study reveals that the perceptions differ respectively of the country of residence. The desirable outcome of opinion variety is generating vibrant opinion sharing. The attitudes towards online discussions in a Facebook group are of great interest as the authors consider Facebook a good platform for future online collaborative projects.

Literature Review

The Movie as a Means of Fostering Cross-cultural Awareness

The analysis of numerous studies demonstrates that many scholars have investigated the film as a tool for foreign language skills development (Chaya & Inpin, 2020; Tran, 2022; King, 2002). Alongside this, the scholars pointed out the role of the film in increasing cultural
awareness (Nur, 2016) and intercultural skills training (Chaya & Inpin, 2020; Roell, 2010; Pandey & Ardichvili, 2015; Mallinger & Rossy, 2003). According to the researchers, the film is “a powerful medium that conveys the values and beliefs of contemporary societies” (Cloete, 2017, p. 1). Wang & Yu (2018) consider the film as “an international artistic language” (p. 681) and “one of the most important and most effective ways to promote international cultural exchange, transfer information, and emotion, and the output of national culture.” (p. 681). Cardon (2010) characterizes the film as “a valuable intellectual exercise in deciphering other cultures.” (p. 151)

Scholars explain how the use of films contributes to the effectiveness of developing cross-cultural awareness. In their opinion, the film is a very comfortable and familiar source of information for contemporary students: younger generations prefer video substitutes to text sources (Starostova and Piskunova (2016). The investigators add that owing to films’ technical characteristics, people “gain their deepest impressions through their senses – what they see, hear, and feel upon entering a new culture” (Cardon, 2010, p. 151). Films help people transfer to different countries and create an experience that they might miss in reality (Champoux, 1999). Moreover, Nur (2016) admits that the film provides rich opportunities for comparing cultures and is an excellent source for developing analytical skills.

The analysis of film-based studies indicates that researchers rarely engage representatives of the culture depicted in the film in their investigations of cross-cultural issues (Starostova & Piskunova, 2016; Wang & Yu, 2018; Mallinger & Rossy, 2003). As a result, the discussion about another culture is carried out by the students who come from the same cultural background, share common cultural values, and might not know much about the other nation's traditions, customs, and history. We assume there is always the risk that film content interpretation might become ambiguous under such conditions.

Based on film characteristics and research results, we suggest that film discussion can efficiently enhance students' cross-cultural awareness if it involves people who can explain cultural peculiarities firsthand and contribute authenticity to the discussion forum.

**Facebook Discussion Group as a Platform for Cross-Cultural Communication.**

According to recent studies, collaborative cross-cultural projects use various communication techniques for providing intercultural exchanges among students: computer conferencing with messaging (Kim & Bonk, 2002; LeBaron et al., 2000), email (Abedrabu, 2012), Facebook (Jin, 2015; Ozdemir, 2017; Raja Zainal Hassan et al., 2020).

The literature analysis indicates that researchers consider Facebook one of the most convenient social networking services for arranging online cross-cultural communication (Bray & Iswanti, 2013; Raja Zainal Hassan et al., 2020; Ozdemir, 2017). Among the opportunities Facebook provides, Bray & Iswanti (2013) point out creating a Facebook group, controlling membership and content, sharing video or audio, and posting notes at a suitable time.
Judging by the conclusions that Deng et al. (2017) have drawn based on their research, using the features of Facebook mentioned above to provide a free flow of online discussion is not enough. The researchers claim that it is essential for moderators to give the participants of virtual communication groups the topics to contemplate (Deng et al., 2017). Setting engaging questions to answer and stating problems can attract students’ attention and urge their animated discussions. Zmiyevska & Glazunova (2018) point out that giving students a choice of topics for discussion on Facebook can turn their learning into a student-centered one, and minimizing the participation of group instructors can allow students to become more responsible for the quality of their posts.

**Culture and the Hofstede Cultural Framework**

According to recent studies, culture is a complex social phenomenon created in human societies during their long-term development. Researchers define it as “a system of shared beliefs and values” (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013, p. 5); “networks of knowledge, consisting of learned routines of thinking, feeling, and interacting with other people, as well as a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world” (Hong, 2009, p. 4).

Hofstede (2001) views culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.” (p. 9) The word “mind” here means “thinking, feeling, and acting, with consequences for beliefs, attitudes, and skills” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 10). Chen (2020) gives a more generalized interpretation of culture: “the sum of material wealth and spiritual wealth created in the historical practice of human society, reflecting the basic quality and comprehensive state of a nation.” (p. 59)

Scholars look at culture as “a shared meaning system” which helps people within a nation understand each other’s behavior (Rohner, 1984). The perception and interpretation of the same actions and events by different cultural societies can differ. Hofstede (2001) worked out a model of cultural variables, known as dimensions, to use them as criteria for comparing cultural differences and helping build appropriate strategies for developing cross-cultural awareness and tolerance of people of different nationalities. Figure 1 demonstrates the comparative scale of the American and Ukrainian cultural values according to six Hofstede (2021) dimensions: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty tolerance vs. uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint.
The application of Hofstede’s (2001) cultural dimensions model for identifying and measuring the differences between the values of different national societies helps raise cross-cultural awareness of the participants.

**Method**

To bring down intercultural barriers, ruin stereotypes and develop a better understanding of the American and Ukrainian cultures, on the initiative of Dr. David Powell, Professor of Southeast Missouri State University, we decided to conduct a Movie-club discussion in a closed Facebook group. The discussion group consisted of Ukrainian teachers and students of Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University, Dr. David Powell, who acted as a moderator of the group, his family members, and American colleagues. The discussion touched upon the plot of the movies, experiences, and life stories of its members.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What intercultural differences in the perception of American movies did the representatives of the American and Ukrainian cultures manifest in the process of the movie club discussion?

2. What are the attitudes to online discussions in a Facebook group?

We have used an online group discussion and a review of written posts in the closed discussion group on Facebook as data collection tools to answer research question 1. We have applied a questionnaire (Appendix, Questionnaire) to answer research question 2.
chosen Hofstede’s framework as a model for understanding cultures and explaining the possible reasons behind cross-cultural differences.

Participants

We collected the data from 83 participants: 2 American University professors from Southeast Missouri State University, two members of the Powells, and 78 Ukrainian members of the discussion; 96% female and 4% male, aged 17 through 65. Ukrainian educators (eighteen language instructors) and sixty sophomore students majoring in teaching English as a foreign language were the participants at Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University. The teaching experience of the professors varied from two to over 40 years.

Procedures

The Movie Club international project lasted five years as an extracurricular activity from 2015 to 2020 - when its members watched and discussed five American movies: Pay it Forward (2015), Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close (2016), Places in the Heart (2017), Freedom Writers (2018), My Big Fat Greek Wedding (2019). For each online discussion which lasted for 7-10 days, the participants were supposed to write an initial post of 150-200 words and participate in the group discussion by posting at least two comments on the entries of their group mates. Table 1 shows the stages of the Movie-club discussion, the participants, and the number of entries reflecting cultural similarities and differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Year of Discussion</th>
<th>Ukrainian participants</th>
<th>American Participants</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Comments Similarities</th>
<th>Comments Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay it Forward</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Writers</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places in the Heart</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Big Fat Greek Wedding</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr. David Powell provided the list of the movies for the Facebook discussion, and the Ukrainian teachers made a final choice of the film based on the following criteria: educational content, cultural elements, and content appropriacy.
As seen from the table, the chosen movies demonstrate different patterns of behavior typical of different cultures, fitting within Hofstede’s framework of national cultures and matching the following dimensions: Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Long Time Orientation (LTO), Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR). The movies are also rich in the following cultural elements: cultural stereotypes, traditions, society problems (gambling, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, homeless people, special educational needs, intercultural conflicts, racism), family relations (single-parent families, latchkey children, single mothers); place of women in society and family, cultural values.

Discussion

Results of the Facebook Discussion

The authors have analyzed the content of 1013 posts and comments of American and Ukrainian participants in the Facebook Movie club discussion. Because Ukraine and the USA belong to the opposite extremes of Hofstede’s theory continuum, bearing different values for the six dimensions, it is only natural that 50.2% of the comments revealed the differences between the two cultures. We will look at these differences through the lens of the resounding factors characterizing both cultures, developed by Hofstede.

Collectivism vs. individualism stems from the degree of dependence/independence the society members experience. Within Ukrainian culture, which scores 91 in collectivism, relations with friends, relatives, neighbors, etc., are fundamental and must be trustful, deep, and personal. Hierarchy in society and family is strict. The Ukrainians would refer to themselves as We with friends when discussing plans. The Americans would emphasize equal rights and opportunities for all. In the business world, managers are accessible, and low-rank employees assist with consulting. Communication is informal and constructive (Hofstede,
2011). The following glimpses of the Movie club discussion illustrate this dimension.

_Latchkey children._ The discussion of _Pay it forward_ raised the social problem of children whose parents were busy at work and could not take proper care of them. The issue of abandoned children is solved differently in the USA and Ukraine.

David: _Trevor was an example of a latchkey child. According to a survey reported by Bloomberg, one American child out of nine comes home to an empty house. In 2013, this represented 4.5 million children home alone for an average of 6.5 hours per week._

Ukrainian so-called _social orphans_ are the children whose parents work abroad; in nine out of 10 cases, they are taken care of by their grandparents (91% in the Transcarpathian region). If one of the parents works abroad, 35% of such children are under the care of grandparents (Kichak, 2013), who teach them essential life skills, values, and traditions. Lena shares her experience of being raised by her grandparents: “When I was 13, my mother began to work abroad, and I lived with my father. Thanks to my grandmother, I KNOW everything I know about cooking and keeping the house from her.”

Another difference is _dealing with alcoholism._ Twelve-step addiction recovery program called Alcoholics Anonymous, which has aided its members to overcome alcoholism in the USA for more than 90 years, greatly impressed the Ukrainian participants of the Movie club. Ukrainian versions of such groups exist only in large cities and are not very popular. If Ukrainians face the problem of alcoholism, they are likely to rely heavily on their immediate family and friends rather than on the professional help of psychiatrists or support from Alcoholics Anonymous groups.

_Proxemics._ Variations in personal space correlated to culture are evident. In Ukrainian culture, the norm is to be physically close when talking and interacting. Max: _Queuing in a bank or a shop, the Ukrainians can be standing too close to each other, which can be very annoying._ For the Americans, personal space is critical. David: “Generally, a casual conversation in America is at arm’s length (literally as a physical measure). For the most part, Americans are not huggers - certainly not in casual encounters.”

The seating arrangement in American classrooms, where each student has an individual desk, reflects _the need for personal space._ Conversely, in Ukrainian schools, two students share a desk, which is typical of collectivist cultures.

_Small talk. Shop talk._ Personal space also extends to the sphere of verbal communication.

David: _Whether small talk or shop talk, light social conversation avoids anything that would be considered offensive, aggressive, or intrusive. A sense of personal space in conversation is present, and it is not polite to violate. Polite people do not discuss politics or religion._
A similar rule applies to impersonal work topics to avoid inserting personal inquiries or comments without being invited to do so. If a Ukrainian begins a conversation with the question How are you, the answer can be pretty extended and detailed, far from being small. Talking about politics, religion, or money is not considered to be taboo in Ukraine.

Cheating. The collectivistic character of relations can explain academic dishonesty in the exams, which is widespread when Ukrainian students prompt, use notes and copy test answers. In American Universities, this kind of behavior is inappropriate.

Another impressive example of collectivist culture comes from the movie Freedom Writers, when Eva (a Latino student) felt compelled to lie to the court out of loyalty to her family and her group, knowing that this would send an innocent youth to prison.

The dimension of power distance reflects the idea of inequality among people in a society. As Ukraine scores high (92) in this dimension, there is a considerable distance between the people with power and the less powerful ones (Hofstede, 2011). Accordingly, the top-down approach is evident in all spheres of life. For instance, the Ukrainians attribute much importance to status roles and symbols. So it is natural that the boss displays a dominant attitude to his employees.

Dr. David Powel encountered this kind of cultural peculiarity during his visit to Ukraine when he could not use the previously allocated time for his report at the scientific conference, as they needed extra time for the presentations of some very influential persons. Consequently, he failed to present most of his carefully prepared material.

Attitude to people with special educational needs is also different in the two cultures. Ukrainian people with special needs received little care and attention until recently. As a matter of course, children with special educational needs got their education at home, lacking socialization and communication with peers as they barely left home. The Ukrainian government adopted the law about inclusive education in 2017. Until then, neither teachers nor students knew the essence of inclusive education and special needs. Natalie (a student) expressed an opinion that most of our (Ukrainian) teachers are not ready for this kind of law. One of the teachers supported this opinion:... teachers of teachers know very little about SEN. I am one of them - until recently, I had not even thought about such things. The story of Dr. Powel brings more light to the issue: On my previous visit to Ukraine, we went to a small school for children with special needs, which was the only such place in the whole region of a country of 45 million people!

From Dr. Powell and his spouse Sue Ann, Ukrainian students learned that all public schools in the USA have at least one specialized teacher to coordinate the Individual Education Plans for these students. Some larger schools have three or more such experts.

Masculinity-femininity. The USA, scoring 62 on this dimension, is a masculine society where the driving force is success and achievement (The winner takes it all). Feminine
cultures, on the contrary, value the quality of life, good relations, and caring for others (Hofstede, 2011). For example, talking about achievements is inappropriate and can be understood as bragging in Ukraine.

The movie club members also had different views on the role of women in society (family). Vicky, a Ukrainian student (0.8%), believes that the woman's destiny is to give birth to children and keep the home: The main thing in life - is a family! Your career will not wait for you at home, money will not wipe your tears, and the glory will not hug you at night. Several other Ukrainian students (5%), although less categoric and realizing the importance of the career, still favored marriage over a job. Olena: I plan to hopefully have my family, as nothing is possible without the support of your family, and I would like to work part-time instead of full-time if possible. The American club members believe in equality of the sexes and the right of a person to determine the place in the world, be it the workplace, the family, or the home.

Some differences the participants expressed in the movie club discussions did not fit into Hofstede’s model and required a closer look at the historical background.

Racism. Freedom writers triggered the discussion of racial abuse in various forms (chauvinism, holocaust, lynching) and organizations (Ku Klux Klan, Nazi, Neo-Nazi). David believes racism is endemic everywhere in the USA. Even those who favored the rule of law and equal opportunity for black people did not necessarily regard them as equals. The Ukrainian students were shocked by racial wars, gang rivalry, and segregation and claimed they did not have such problems in Ukraine.

Vika: I believe that most people in Ukraine understand that people cannot hate others just because they are not their nationality. In my city, there are many students from different countries, and no one hurts me. Personally, there is no difference if people from America and Germany.

After David pointed out that racist divisions lie in origin, culture, religion, and appearance, one of the Ukrainian teachers remembered a sad incident in the 70s. Komsomol activists cut her husband’s modern pants into stripes on the dance floor, as they considered them an element of the bourgeois culture.

Culture is a profound and multi-faceted concept; comparing two cultures within an article is challenging. Dr. Powell produced a metaphor saying it is like trying to empty a gravel truck with no hydraulic lift or shovel. You can pick up one piece of gravel at a time. We hope the authors have removed some pieces of gravel in this analysis.

Questionnaire results
(Q1) The first question of the questionnaire was, What was different about the Facebook class compared to regular classes?
The student participants pointed out that working online, from home, at a convenient time, using various reference sources, and sharing links and pictures was comfortable. The teachers, in their turn, considered the online forum a unique opportunity for them to participate actively in the discussion, in several threads simultaneously, enjoy themselves and practice co-teaching. They also believed it was an excellent opportunity for shy students to participate and do their best. All the participants thought it was helpful that they could control their answers and had the time to think everything over.

(Q2) The responses to the second question, Did you find the Facebook class instructive? In what particular way? - were also positive.

All participants believed it was highly instructive, thanks to the participation of Dr. Powell, who provided extended professional responses, gave links, and recommended extra reading. University professors also mentioned the Grading Rubric, Tips about writing requirements, and a Model of an initial post, which Dr. Powell suggested at the initial stage and showed clear objectives to the students.

(Q3) The question Would you like to have another Facebook class in this course or some future course? - received positive responses: Sure, I enjoyed the process! Yes, it would be great to have more Facebook classes.

(Q4) Answering the question, What should we do the same or different for a Facebook class in the future? - most of the student participants wrote that they liked everything. Supervising teachers recommended that the students make the most of the situation and ask the American participants questions, which leads to more positive communication. They should also learn to express their opinion less directly; use good examples to illustrate writing and make it interesting for the reader; express a positive attitude; prepare for the discussion in advance. Several students thought they should be engaged in selecting the movie for discussion. Another student said it would be good to take a break from the conversation for the weekend as it was potato season in Ukraine, and she was busy helping her parents in the garden.

(Q5) The responses to the last question, Did you find this format difficult to access or work with? - showed that some students did not have regular access to the Internet. One of the students had problems with her computer and could not participate in the discussion. The rest of the participants did not have any difficulties.

To sum up, the research findings prove that the engagement of pre-service teachers and their professors in international collaboration and exchange is an enriching and rewarding endeavor that broadens the horizons (Powell et al., 2014, p. 34), making us global educators and out-of-box thinkers. Increased awareness of social and cultural issues and expertise in dealing with them adds to professionalism.
Conclusion

The present study, based on a 5-year-long Movie Club international project involving the representatives of American and Ukrainian cultures, has allowed us to come to some reasonable conclusions. Owing to its meaningful, authentic character, cross-cultural discussion of films, rich in cultural elements, is an efficient tool for raising intercultural awareness and honing cultural sensitivity. Vital issues depicted in films encourage students to participate actively and share their experiences and views on the issues under discussion. The extracurricular format of Facebook interaction, unlimited time and place, and the ability to read other group members’ posts before shaping an opinion create a comfortable, stress-free atmosphere for students. A relaxed mode of discussion, based on the given choice of questions to answer, facilitates student-centeredness. The conditions mentioned above contributed to a free flow of the film discussions and helped us highlight and describe some value differences in American and Ukrainian cultures according to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions model. The research findings contain the value differences related to the power distance index, individualism vs. collectivism, and masculinity vs. femininity. Within the framework of this research, we have focused only on the three variables mentioned above. Our further study might investigate the other cultural dimensions of the Hofstede model. As a result of the participation of American representatives in online discussions, Ukrainian students acquired a firsthand interpretation of the events and the behavior of people in the films, which could cause misunderstanding. The students demonstrated interest and open-mindedness in discussing the peculiarities of other cultures, and in this term, they learned more about their own culture. This format of interaction solidified their language skills.

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Appendix
Questionnaire
(Q1) What was different from the Facebook class to the regular classes?
(Q2) Did you find the Facebook class instructive? In what way?
(Q3) Would you like to have another Facebook class in this or some future course?
(Q4) What should be done the same or different for a Facebook class in the future?
(Q5) Did you find this format difficult to access or to work?
A Critical Discourse Analysis of a Selected Non-Governmental Organizations' Report on Violence against Women in Iraq

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Abstract
Violence against women stands as one of the most dominant human rights violations. There are no social, economic, or national boundaries when it comes to violence against women. It is estimated that one in three women in the world will experience physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives. Several non-governmental organizations’ reports have addressed the problem of violence against women in Iraq. Thus; the current study provides a critical analysis of the discursive techniques that are employed in the non-governmental organizations' reports to show how Iraqi women are abused and subject to violence. Consequently; this study focuses on the linguistic and ideological underpinnings of a selected text on violence against women in Iraq. It attempts to show how language produces and maintains domination and abuse of power, engendering injustice, inequality, and ideological viewpoints. To answer this, the researchers draw upon van Dijk’s (2011) socio-cognitive approach and (2000) ideological analysis. The findings of the study have revealed that the non-governmental organizations' report attempts to reflect the ideological position of the non-governmental organizations towards the Iraqi government, which declared its rejection of violence against women through its constitution and Panel Code. Despite this, the researchers have found that there is no actual adoption of these provisions in reality in its social context. Accordingly; the report has depended heavily on authority and evidentiality to show power relations and through the construction of reality based on societal perspectives. Using the linguistic and discoursal strategies employed in the analysis; the researchers have found that the report has materialized a negative attitude towards the government and society by referring to the power dominance which is exercised by social groups.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, ideology, NGOs report, power relation, violence against women

Introduction

Violence against Women (VAW) represents a violation of human rights and a global health problem. It involves physical, sexual, and psychological acts of violence that happen randomly or in long-term abuse. Several documents have shown the prevalence of VAW across all geographic locations, nations, cultures, and economic groups. In all cases, it is presented as a manifestation of the inequality between men and women over history in which gender differences between the two have created cultural stereotypes and attitudes that enhanced a cycle of violence. Some surveys indicate that women in less developed countries suffer from higher rates of violence. This suggests that the economic state of Iraq plays an essential role in enhancing VAW (Blanchfield, Margesson & Seelke, 2009).

The effect of the economic state of the country on VAW is obvious in Iraq, where harsh socio-economic conditions resulted from economic sanctions (1990-2003) during Saddam Hussein’s regime, and the US war in 2003 and its aftermath have affected women and gender relations severely, leading Iraqi women to be the main losers in Iraq’s present and future, social and political map (Al-Ali, 2005). The US war in Iraq was followed by prolonged sectarian violence that has extravagant effects on women. In 2014 ISIL controlled some major cities. ISIL fighters have committed several violations of human rights, including flogging, killing, rape, and trafficking for sex. Within days, reliable stories of ISIL members abducting and raping women began to emerge. Iraqi women were immediately commanded to cover themselves and stay at home as part of ISIL’s radical agenda (Davis, 2016). VAW, as a term, is frequently used to define a diverse range of acts. Killing, rape, and sexual abuse are examples of these crimes, as well as physical abuse, emotional assault, battering, harassment, sexual exploitation, genital mutilation, and sexual slavery (Crowell & Burgess, 1996).

Living in a patriarchal society, Iraqi women are so vulnerable to violence and lack physical, social, and economic support and protection. With all the conflicts that Iraq has been through, women live in tremendously challenging circumstances, which get worse with the death of the husband or male relative and the emotional and financial toll it takes (Iraq National Action Plan, 2014-2018).

In this case, Iraqi law should provide all the protection and support that women lack. Although the Iraqi Constitution of 2005 prohibits all kinds of violence, as stated in Article 29, “All forms of violence and abuse in the family, school, and society shall be prohibited,” (p.13) still, the Iraqi Penal Code of 1969 is assumed to provide impunity for perpetrators of specific violations of women’s rights including ‘honor’ crimes and rape. The Iraqi government has made specific essential steps to ensure women’s rights, one of which is its assignment to international treaties concerned with women’s issues, including CEDAW and ICESCR. Women’s rights organizations, Iraq’s Anti-Violence against Women Strategy (2013-2017), and the National Strategy on Advancement of Women in Iraq call for legislation on violence against women. Only the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has a law on violence against women.

Therefore, the current study scrutinises the Non-Governmental Organizations (henceforth, NGOs) report calling for the government to protect women's rights and terminate violence against them. However, in approaching this social problem, the researchers are concerned with how VAW
is represented in texts based on the writers’ knowledge since “knowledge of real people in real communities is defined in terms of the beliefs that are generally accepted based on the knowledge standards or criteria of a community” (van Dijk, 2011, p.33).

Consequently, this study aims at providing a critical analysis of the discursive techniques that are employed by the NGOs report to show the violence against women in Iraq, which is not studied previously by scholars and researchers. Many researchers have focused on and scrutinized women's rights and violation of these rights concerning gender, media, and politics, such as Gungor and Prins (2010), Tranchese and Zollo (2013), Mosha (2013), Voller (2014), Källvik, (2018), Risdaneva (2018), Evianda, Ramli, and Harun (2019). Therefore, critical discourse analysis shows how language produces and reproduces domination and abuse of power, engendering injustice and inequality (van Dijk, 2001a). Thus, this study focuses on the language choices and ideological attitudes of the selected text on VAW through the adoption of van Dijk's (2011) socio-cognitive approach and van Dijk's (2000) model of ideological analysis. The study emphasises the importance of language in forming attitudes toward the problem of violence against women. Thus, an in-depth study about a serious problem can help to draw attention to other severe but underestimated social problems and to influence people's awareness, understanding and empathy.

The researchers attempt to answer the following questions:
1. What are the discourse topics that are highlighted to represent violence against women?
2. How does the selected text represent and construct women's identities through language use through using linguistic features, including grammar, lexicon, metaphor, rhetorical devices, evidentiality, modality, presupposition, implicature, and argumentation?
3. What are the ideological strategies that are employed in the selected text?
4. How are the participants' knowledge and attitudes reflected in the selected text?

Literature Review

In this section, the researchers have tended to give a brief review of the literature about VAW. Gungor and Prins (2010) studied the way equality between men and women is represented in prominent adult literacy textbooks in Turkey. The study examined the representation of gender roles and identities in visual images and reading texts. It is based on Gee (2005), Meyer (2001) and Rogers et al. (2005) analytical studies. The study adopted critical discourse analysis since it maintains that power inequalities between men and women are ideologically sustained and reproduced by textbooks.

A study that seeks to investigate VAW representation is done by Tranchese and Zollo (2013), in which they have conducted the British media. The study follows Fairclough’s (2001) model along with Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2008) theory of multimodality. The study examines how victims and perpetrators of rape are presented in the printed and broadcast media. This study analyses the recontextualization of rape incidents in two different media channels or news reports and across genres that use distinct verbal and visual elements.

By exploring the discursive construction of gender-related violence in Kiswahili novels, Mosha's (2013) research has centered on indirect exposure to violence against women. Since
novels in Tanzania represent an important medium of media and are especially important in the lives of young people, this research explored how novelists use dominant discourses of gender-based violence to interpret perpetrators and victims of violence. Using Foucauldian discourse research, a collection of 15 Kiswahili novels, written between 1975 and 2004, was studied to expose the tactics novelists use as they depict, replicate and often question prevailing discourses in their novels about violence against women.

A study that was conducted in Iraq is done by Voller (2014). It sought to reveal the gender-based violence in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the legal attention which should be given to this subject. It stressed the practical measures that should be done to prohibit practices such as honor killings, female genital mutilation, and domestic violence. The position of transnational women's rights networks in the area is particularly addressed in this report. It highlighted the active strategy of these networks to tie their purpose to the KRG's effort to legitimize and establish its disputed hegemony over the territory of Kurdistan. In doing so, the paper discussed an underexplored topic in the Kurdistan Region's literature on women's rights movements and adds to the study of transnational activism as a source of normative reform.

Källvik (2018) has studied the representation, articulation and negotiation of sexual harassment and assaults in Swedish social media and in particular Twitter, focusing much on a campaign named #metoo that highlights how many people had experienced sexual harassment. The analysis was based on Fairclough's (2003) model and a feminist poststructural approach. Sexual violence was seen as a concept that is discursively created and thus, based on the particular moment, location and context in which it is generated, is often non-stable and always negotiable. Therefore, three themes were specified: boundaries, institutionalisation and tensions. They all promoted an intention of turning all the problems of sexual assault into a lack of employer responsibility and the working environment by presenting an image of sexual abuse as a complex concept without defined boundaries. Sexual abuse is often viewed in Sweden as both a brand-new problem and something that has already been a reality in the lives of many people.

Risdaneva (2018) has scrutinized the way women are presented in the news report of crimes of sexual violence against women. The study examines two newspapers that are from different cultures, the Jakarta Post and the Guardian. The Jakarta Post is an Indonesian newspaper whereas the Guardian is a British newspaper. The study uses the naming analysis of social actors as an analytical tool, which is a part of critical discourse analysis. Naming is a tool proposed by van Leeuwen (2003) to investigate how social roles are represented in specific contexts. This analysis investigated the choice of lexical items in representing the main news actors. The results of the research reveal that the selections of the naming categories employed by the newspapers are different.

A focus on psychological gender-based violence is given in the study of Negash, Demise and Fenta (2018). The study emphasises the way such kind of violence is represented through language in the Jimma Zone of Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia. Women, children, attorneys, gender consultants and police officers were identified in the region involved in the report. Using focus group conversations and main informant interviews, the required data for the analysis is gathered. Using CDA as an analytical approach, the researchers drew on Fairclough’s
(2003) framework. The study has shown different forms of psychological gender based violence, including sexual harassment, using non-verbally provoking and molesting acts, distribution of inappropriate, insolent and obscene suggestive or evaluative remarks, and verbally intimidating and teasing girls and women with flirtatious actions.

Wolf’s (2018) study, however, focused on anti-violence initiatives and their role in media. The study first identified the way different programs and formats represent identical (visual) narratives of cliched imagination on intimate partner abuse, although much of the issue stays concealed in its structural context. This confusion affected the comprehension of gender-based violence as a societal phenomenon. Women's anti-violence movement may help provide alternative appropriate representations and contrast with the ‘malestream’ representation of the subject. The study analysed the contributions of anti-violence initiatives that spread over Europe, Spain and Austria from 2007 to 2011. The study seeks to reveal how the collective accounts of male-to-female relationship conflict are shaped by anti-violence programs, highlighting examples of good practice and basic ideological principles.

In the description of women’s position in Prohaba Daily News texts, Evianda, Ramli and Harun's (2019) have employed Mills and van Leeuwen (2008) model of critical discourse analysis as an analytical tool, focusing on investigating actor position, exclusion and inclusion. The research findings prove that women are described in both subject and object positions in Prohaba Daily News texts. In three reports, women were given as non-marginalized subjects, whereas in two news reports, women are given the position of the non-marginalized object. Regarding marginalization, by using exclusion and inclusion strategies, women in the marginalized object position are identified in eight news reports.

Another study was done by Hoppstadius (2019) which analysed the way women are presented from an intersectional perspective. The study conducted five Action Plans for combating men’s violence against women. These Plans were adopted by the Swedish government as a way of protecting women subjected to violence. The study is based on Fairclough’s (1992; 2010) framework. It showed that first, women are grouped into numerous categories which are likely to contribute to the perception that specific classes of women are victims of abuse. Second, in a heteronormative sense and a gender-equal context, women are described. This neglected non-heterosexual abuse. Third, both their duty and their lack of agency were emphasised by the definition of women as agents. Hoppstadius ends by suggesting that women should be taken into consideration along with their situation and needs, otherwise, they would be given inadequate help and support, which might put victims of violence in danger.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Van Dijk’s (2011) Socio-Cognitive Approach**

Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach contends that the connection between discourse and society is mediated through cognition. This cognitive mediation has a role in grasping the link between social structures and discourse structures. Although these types of structures are different, they can be associated with the mental representation of language users as individuals and as social members (van Dijk, 2001). Thus, the socio-cognitive approach has a Discourse-Cognition-Society triangle. Each component will be described below.
Cognitive Component

Traditionally, ‘cognition’ was generally understood as being 'consciousness', which is both a vague and abstract term. Within the sociocognitive theory, cognition is said to include both 'model' in episodic memory (referring to personal knowledge and beliefs about specific circumstances, events, and experiences) and "systems of group knowledge, attitudes, norms, and ideologies, represented in 'semantics' or rather 'social' memory". Each cognitive system can be represented differently with particular discursive contents and structures. Likewise, mental and social uses require different cognitive strategies. Mental processes can be described at the macro-level of analysis, and can be reproduced, acquired, confirmed, or changed through the micro-level (van Dijk, 1991).

Cognitive structures involve the following points such as memory which is the space in which cognitive processes are located or stored. Mental models in which the personal memories are interpreted as personal, distinctive, individual mental models, preserved in Episodic Memory, after being processed in Working Memory. Social cognition means that cognition not only includes personal mental models, but there are also different socially shared cognitions. Individuals of the same community share generic and abstract knowledge of the world. (van Dijk, 2015). Therefore, van Dijk (2014) suggests distinguishing between ‘personal’ and ‘social’ cognition. Individuals produce and subjectively interpret discourse(s) through personal cognition, based on their "socially shared representations" (social cognition). Whereas personal cognition is understood as knowledge and mental models, social one is reflected in attitudes and ideologies. Social cognition is given in three forms that are crucial to the understanding of discourse. They are knowledge (personal, group, cultural), attitudes, and ideologies (Meyer, 2001).

Knowledge of the world is a prerequisite element to all cognitive processes "of perception, understanding, action, interaction, language use, communication, and discourse." In the interpretation of discourse, such knowledge is enabled and expressed in the comprehension of words, meanings of expressions, and overall meanings of discourse, and the creation of personal mental models. Conversely, this knowledge can be acquired and improved through comprehending discourse and forming mental models (van Dijk, 2018). At all levels of discourse, knowledge is expressed and communicated, for example, through stress placement or word order to structure topic and emphasis information in sentences, the expression of knowledge sources in evidential, the use of "implications, implicatures, presuppositions, argumentation, among many others" (van Dijk, 2015, p.68).

Regarding attitudes, they are fundamentally social, just as sociocultural knowledge is. In other words, they should not be interpreted as personal beliefs that are stored in mental models. Members of the social group share these attitudes, but each with their own “identity, actions, norms and values, relations to other groups and resources"(van Dijk, 2014, p.9). The relationship between social groups and their members is reflected in attitudes, as is the way that individuals use language to communicate their views on various social topics, situations, people, or groups. Group members’ social activities are often shaped by certain attitudes, such as ethnic discrimination, which is often used to justify various kinds of segregation, and discriminatory speech (van Dijk, 2014).
In addition to attitudes, social cognition includes social knowledge, which refers to beliefs shared by all or most members of a given community, and ideologies which are the “basis of the social representations shared by members of a group” (van Dijk, 1998, p.8). Ideologies enable individuals, as community members, to arrange and act appropriately depending on social beliefs about what is the case, positive or negative, right or wrong, for them. Ideologies can also form the foundation of certain arguments for, and explanations for, specific social constructions or indeed shape a particular worldview in general. Ideologies serve the material and abstract interests of the group, mainly those of domination over other groups and resistance against the dominated groups, both of which have an essential role in developing ideologies. They function locally as given in everyday social practices and globally as the socially shared mental ‘monitor’ of social opposition, conflict, struggle, and discrimination (van Dijk, 1998).

Since they are socially shared beliefs, ideologies are not personal or private, however, they are not any kind of beliefs but more fundamental or axiomatic. They control and organize other socially shared beliefs. They are gradually acquired and modified over a lifetime or an extended period, and so need to be relatively constant. One does not become pacifist, feminist, racist, or communist suddenly, nor change a fundamental ideological stance in a matter of days (van Dijk, 2006a).

Ideologies are relevant to the study of discourse since “people acquire, express and reproduce their ideologies largely by text or talk.” Discourse structures and social structures can be related through ideologies. Thus, properties of social relations like class, gender, or ethnicity, are regularly associated with discourse structures, such as structural units, levels, or discourse strategies embedded in the social, political, and cultural situations. Similarly, the relations between, on the one hand, social organizations, institutions, classes, occupations, contexts, power, or political decision-making, and, on the other hand, the systems of discourse (van Dijk, 1995).

Generally speaking, discourses are influenced by ideological polarization, which is a schema in which a group conflict is involved, and it stresses the opposition between the two groups or between Us and Them. In this way, groups create an ideological representation of themselves and others. Such representation is based on emphasising Our positive characteristics and emphasising Their negative ones. “Positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation seems to be a fundamental property of ideologies” (van Dijk, 1998, p.69). This strategy includes ‘good’ attributes of Our friends and allies and ‘bad’ attributes of enemies. Rhetorical devices may be used to enhance polarization, stressing the contrast between the features of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (van Dijk, 2006b).

**Social Component**

Explaining cognition entails that language users are, above all, members of social groups, institutions, and organizations, in addition to being unique individuals with their minds and experiences who use text and talk to interact and communicate with other participants. Hence, a social source for cognition and discursive interaction is needed, similar to the way the cognitive interface is needed to define and elucidate many properties of discourse (van Dijk, 2014).
It should be noted that discourse, society, and cognition are interrelated, and different aspects of discourse and cognition that are given above (like knowledge and ideology) are simultaneously social. Accordingly, society can be scrutinized at the level of communication and situations and the level of communities, social organizations, and institutions. Social structure and discourse are linked by social structure representations in the mind of social participants and constructing these social structures through discourse and communication between members as social actors. And though the macro concepts of power and dominance are the primary concern of the CDA, their real analysis is conducted at the micro level of discourse and social practices. (van Dijk, 2001b).

**Discourse Component**

Although it is essential to determine the nature of the cognitive and social elements of the theory, the crucial role of critical discourse analysts is the discourse element. CDA does not establish a specific theory of discourse structures, instead, it goes beyond typical structural theories of discourse. Critical discourse analysts identify and illustrate how discourse in society can be engaged in the (re)production of power abuse or against such dominance. This also includes a cognitive dimension which is essential to account for the role of knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies in such discursive dominance (van Dijk, 2015).

Described in this way, this approach is perfectly suitable for this study, since it concentrates on mental models concerning cognitive components such as ideology, knowledge, and attitudes and how they can influence discourse. Besides, the present research attempts to reveal the importance of ideology in discourse. Therefore, it tends to follow van Dijk’s (2011) model in which he specified some of the discourse structures, such as topics, actor description, levels, details, the precision of description, evidentiality, metaphor, presupposition, implicature, lexicon rhetorical devices, and argumentation.

**Van Dijk’s (2000) Model of Ideology**

The researchers adopt van Dijk’s (2000) framework in which he illustrated the categories that are most important in any CDA study. Based on the theory of the ideological square that represents the ideological analysis that is followed in the current study. The theory of ideological square consists of four principles, as shown in the table.

### Table 1. Van Dijk's model (2000, p.44)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Us</th>
<th>Them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasise positive things about Us.</td>
<td>Emphasise negative things about Them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De-emphasise negative things about Us.</td>
<td>De-emphasise positive things about Them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This theory is essentially dependent on two core strategies, i.e. “say positive things about Us, say negative things about Them” van Dijk (2000, p. 44). These strategies are materialised through different discoursal moves like Compassion, Disclaimer, National self-glorification, Polarization, Vagueness, Humanitarianism, Authority, Categorization, Comparison, Counter-factual, Empathy,
Example, Explanation, Generalization, (il)legality, Number Game, and Victimization. Most of these strategies in this framework are selected since they are closely related to the data.

Thus, the study combines these models to analyse the selected NGOs’ reports in question. Figure (1) elucidates the theoretical framework adopted in the present study.

**Figure 1.** The theoretical framework of the study

As Figure one shows there are two types of analysis adopted. First, the cognitive analysis is done by following van Dijk’s (2011) model and starting with linguistic analysis which is divided into *macro-analysis* and *micro-analysis*. The *macro-analysis* aims at revealing the discourse topics or themes. Moving to the *micro-analysis*, the study tries to illustrate the linguistic features of the data starting with the semantic level and syntactic one, then moving to pragmatic and rhetorical levels. Once this is done, the researchers are to follow the second model, van Dijk (2000), trying to uncover the most prominent ideologies followed by both sides by examining specific ideological strategies.

**Methodology**

The present study follows a qualitative research method where the collected data is analysed to end up with naturalistic, interpretive rather than statistical outcomes (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Qualitative analysis is a way of studying and comprehending the meaning that individuals or communities attribute to a social or human problem. Inductive analysis of the data is done so that it moves from particulars to general themes, trying to explain the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). What characterizes qualitative research is that it emphasises the process, interpretation, and meaning. The leading agent of data collection and analysis is the researcher, usually following an inductive process ending with a highly descriptive product (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Compared to quantitative analysis, qualitative research is concerned with context rather than statistical assumptions and estimates (Crosby & Salazar, 2020).
Due to this fact, qualitative researchers generally prefer purposeful sampling, which emphasises the in-depth understanding of particular cases that are information-rich. Purposeful sampling should be understood in terms of how many issues can be derived from the samples that are of great significance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 2015). Relevance, purpose, and having good information are given much more weight within purposeful sampling than being representative, which is a characteristic of random statistical sampling (Fletcher & Plakoyiannaki, 2011). Therefore, the current study depends on purposeful sampling.

**Data Selection**

The researchers chose a report entitled *Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Iraq* (2019). This report is submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women by various organizations such as the organization for Women’s Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), ASUDA, MADRE, Human Rights and Gender Justice (HRGJ) Clinic, City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law, Al-Taqwa Association, Awan Organization, and Baghdad Women Association. It can be accessed on the following official electronic website in the form of a word document [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/IRQ/INT_CEDAW_ICO_IRQ_33722_E.doc](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/IRQ/INT_CEDAW_ICO_IRQ_33722_E.doc)The report was submitted to CEDAW by various organizations. It addresses the different forms of violence that are prevalent in Iraq and reflects on the government’s response to these forms.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

This section offers a thorough analysis of the NGO's report through the adopted framework. This framework is utilized to identify the macro-structures and micro-structures that are essential to revealing the ideological attitudes found in the selected text.

**Discourse Topics**

The analysed discourse includes several topics that address the central theme of the text, which is violence against women. The macro-propositions that define the entire text can be illustrated as follows:

1) Sexual and GBV, including honor killings, early marriages, and sex trafficking, is increasing in Iraq, and the government has failed to prevent or address them despite its obligations under CEDAW.
2) Crimes committed by ISIL based on gender are also highlighted, calls for transparent trials acknowledging these crimes, and demands pay attention to the rights of women fleeing ISIL.
3) NGOs are not allowed to provide shelters for women, and such shelters are illegal and legal shelters provided by the governments take a long process to accept victims.
4) Collaboration between the government and the NGOs is needed to provide enough space for victims’ needs.
5) Women’s legal identification is given based on the support of a male companion, putting much difficulty on widows with no death certificate for the father and rape victims.
6) Discrimination is experienced by women of disabilities and Afro-Iraqi women.

The reduction of these main macro-propositions might lead to a more global macro-proposition that summarizes what the whole discourse is about. It can be given as ‘Different forms of violence
are experienced by women in Iraq where most of these crimes are socially accepted and lack of enough legislation that helps to prevent them, besides biased legal provisions, regardless of Iraq’s international human rights obligations under CEDAW.’ This topic is structured from the six higher-level macro-propositions and utilizes the construction of macro-rule. Moreover, this topic gives information that is partly expressed in the title of the report.

Linguistic and Ideological analysis

Because of place constraints, some extracts from the texts are identified according to the four types of violence against women that the researchers have selected; therefore, the reader can access the whole text online on the website mentioned in the list of references. Thus, the linguistic and ideological analyses are based on van Dijk's (2011) model, amalgamated with the ideological analysis provided by van Dijk's (2000) model.

Extract 1

II. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Iraq
Honor Killings

Recent years have seen an increase in “honor” killings of women in Iraq as a result of a variety of factors including weakening institutions, an increase in violence from armed militias, and the reinforcement of tribal and religious norms….In 2017, 272 cases of “honor” crimes and 3,400 domestic violence cases were reported to the police and referred to courts. In the aftermath of the conflict with ISIL, many women are still at risk of “honor” killing as they return to their homes for perceived “dishonor” they bring to their families and communities.... Women in prominent positions such as politicians, journalists, doctors, and human rights defenders are also targeted for “honor” killings for defying gender roles and taking on active public positions…. In 2002, Law No 14 amended the Iraqi Penal Code, stating that the killing of women for reasons of “honor” is no longer a legal excuse that may lessen the punishment for purposes of the applications of Articles 128, 130, 131. (Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Iraq, 2019, p.1)

This extract is about sex and GBV, specifically about ‘honor’ killings. The extract starts with an argumentation about the increase of honor killings crimes where different factors are used as arguments to prove this standpoint so that it is viewed as a fact. These factors are “weakening institutions,” “violence from armed militias,” and “tribal and religious norms.” These factors are not only used to prove the prevalence of ‘honor’ killings but also reinforce the already established negative description of the government. The nominalization utilized in the first sentence, “the reinforcement,” helps in the negative description of the society since its religious and tribal norms are described as being ‘reinforced’ instead of intentionally followed. Furthermore, the word ‘religious’ is mistakenly used here because the majority of Iraqi society are Muslims, and Islam has declared that these crimes are prohibited in the Holy Quran as it says “whoever kills a believer deliberately, his reward is Jahannam (hell) where he shall remain forever, and Allah shall be angry with him and shall cast a curse upon him, and He has prepared for him a mighty punishment” (Surat Al-Nessa, 93 translated by Ali, 2003). Both the Holy Quran and the Hadith (the sayings of Mohammed) have not condoned these crimes.
Facts given about a topic can be asserted with *modality* as being possible, probable, or necessary (Van Dijk, 2011). Thus, the fact that honor killing cases are unreported is asserted as a probable situation where the adverb ‘often’ is used to suggest that. When the text mentions the difficulty of finding accurate statistics, *contrast* is used, which reveals much about the organization of the information in the writers’ mental models. The first phrase is given as a fact, and hence, it is true that most cases go unreported, whereas the second phrase represents an opinion and therefore such estimates are not confirmed. In structuring a discourse, writers usually present certain *evidence* for their views or claims. This can be seen in the way the report mentions the number of ‘honor’ killing cases in 2017 according to UN estimates which serve as evidence to prove that these crimes are frequent. The way honor killings are viewed is based on the international system of beliefs. Therefore, in describing women abused by ISIL, the phrase ‘perceived “dishonor”’ is used to criticize the system of beliefs in Iraqi society. The word ‘perceived’ suggests that it is not a fact or real dishonor but rather a misguided belief. Also, in the argumentation about the risk faced by victims of ISIL crimes, an *example* is used as an *argument* or proof for the threat experience by those victims. In addition to that, the phrase “unjustly incarcerated under false charges” can be related to the negative description of the government because it *implicates* that, arbitrary arrests can happen where free people are falsely judged and that law is unfairly applied.

Then, the extract reflects on the way the Iraqi Penal Code deals with these crimes, which is described as being discriminatory since it offers mitigated sentences by the use of the phrase “honourable motives”. This sentence is structured in the form of *topic-comment*, where the comment or the information that is assumed to be new for the speaker is the mitigated sentences provided for killers. This helps to improve the impunity for VAW that is already suggested. The fact that the penal code is amended *implies* that it is applied in a wrong way, and thus, ‘honor’ killings are declared illegal. Two *nominalizations* are used ‘the killing’ and ‘the punishment’ drawing attention to the action and its consequences. Then, *contrast* is used between the amendment of the Penal Code and the wide interpretations of it. This helps to reinforce the government’s failure in protecting women. It is further proved through the phrase ‘a lack of legal protection against “honor” killings’ which contributes to the negative description of the Iraqi government. Saying that honor killings are socially accepted refers much to the shared beliefs of Iraqi society which suggests that the action is described as being *permitted* due to social norms.

Different ideological strategies are used within this extract starting with *norm expression* which is utilized from the beginning since ‘honor killings’ are crimes that occur for social norms considerations. *Negative other-presentation* is maintained by revealing the government’s inability to prevent ‘honor’ crimes due to weak institutions and discriminatory laws. The writers also make use of *number game* to demonstrate the fact that honor crimes are prevailing by providing estimates done by the UN. This strategy also coincides with the ideological strategy of *authority* since the reference to estimates done by the UN serves to support the claims about increasing in ‘honor’ killings. *Generalization* is also used in mentioning women in high positions as being targeted for honor killings. With the employment of *illegality*, the report reinforces the fact that legal provisions are biased. Therefore, the report makes use of the Iraqi Penal Code to show where impunity can be granted to perpetrators of these crimes, on the base of what is called “honourable motives.” The fact that there are no trials for perpetrators of such crimes and that women are left
in fear allude to victimization as a key ideological strategy. Women in these situations are described as victims with no social or legal support. This may relate to empathy as another strategy used by the writers in addressing women denied their human rights.

**Extract 2**

Response by the government of Iraq

Given the increase in “honor” killings in recent years it remains clear that the government has failed to adopt a strategy to eliminate the practice of “honor” killings. While we commend the government’s recent steps to launch the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women in Iraq in coordination with UNAMI and UNFPA, the lack of government will to pass much needed legislation to address gender-based violence, such as the pending Family Violence Protection Law, contravenes this national strategy. This interpretation fails to acknowledge the culture of impunity created by allowing for mitigated sentencing when crimes are committed for so-called “honourable motives.” Without tackling the underlying cultural norms and customs that permit “honor” killings, and impunity for “honor” killers, Articles 128, 130, 131, and 409 of the Iraqi Penal Code will continue to allow impunity for “honor” crimes committed against women. (Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Iraq, 2019, p.2)

In this extract, a focused structure is given from the beginning through the fronting in which important elements are placed initially unlike where they are normally found, thus making them more prominent (Altiner, 2018). This is seen in the placement of the verb ‘given’ at the beginning of the sentence which seeks to heavily stress the increase in ‘honor’ killing cases and the estimates given already. This focus on the high rates of these crimes is followed by an active construction showing the agency of the government and stressing their failure in eliminating this violence. The phrase “remains clear that the government has failed” continues to describe the government as having failed in an obvious way which contributes to its negative description. In mentioning the government’s steps to protect women’s rights, an active sentence is used “While we commend the government’s recent steps” helping to establish a positive presentation of the NGOs since they are viewed as being neutral taking both, the positive and negative sides of the government’s actions. Also, this extract presupposes knowledge about the government’s attempts to launch national strategies to protect women’s rights. However, these attempts are underestimated through the use of contrast, concentrating on the government’s unwillingness to pass needed legislation. The fact that there is a contradiction in the government’s actions alludes to a negative presentation of the government, describing it as fluctuating and not having a well-defined ideology or consistency in dealing with women’s issues.

The government’s response to the Committee represents an argumentation upon whether the phrase “honourable motives” provides mitigated sentences or not. A negative lexicalization is used through the verb ‘claims’ which implicates uncertainty about the truth of what is said. It gives much about the way the NGOs view the government’s claim as being misguided beliefs rather than a fact. The government’s reply comes in the form of a definition, that is trying to define the phrase “honourable motives” as those motives that include both men and women. This is followed by a contrast where the government’s words are tested with the fact that perpetrators of these crimes
are given mitigated sentences. Mentioning these sentences serve as an argument to prove the NGOs’ standpoint.

Speaking ideologically, this writer makes use of what is called a disclaimer which is a positive self-presentation that is followed by a phrase focusing exclusively on negative other-presentation. This is illustrated in the second sentence of this extract which shows NGOs as being considerate in respecting the government’s steps, then, shedding light on its failure in passing protective laws. Then, the explanation strategy plays an important role in the government’s reply which also involves generalization concerning how “honourable motives” is given to include all of society. An irony is made concerning the contrast between the government’s explanation and the application of Iraqi Penal Code articles.

Extract 3

Forced, Temporary, and Early Marriage

An estimated 24 percent of Iraqi girls marry before the age of 18, and a 2015 study of marriages in nine governorates across Iraq found that 33.9 percent of marriages were conducted outside the courts system, of which 22 percent involved girls younger than 14 years old. Forced, temporary, and early marriage has become a strategy of economic survival for many of Iraq’s poor families living in a context of ongoing conflict and insecurity, who may decide to marry their daughters off early with the idea that this spares them from financial and security burdens….There has also reportedly been a resurgence of the practice of fasliyya, marrying a woman off to resolve a dispute, in Southern Iraq where 11 women were forced to marry in such an agreement in Basra in 2015. (Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Iraq, 2019, p.3)

This extract starts with estimates about early marriages in Iraq. These estimates serve as evidence to implicate the prevalence of these marriages. The phrase “outside the courts’ system” presupposes the possibility of conducting marriages outside the court due to religious and social acceptance of them. Mentioning this fact is important to reveal early marriages since the court does not allow the marriage of people under 15 years old. Negative lexicalization is used in describing and mentioning the types of these marriages, starting with ‘forced’ which suggests coercing women into an unwanted marriage. The word ‘temporary’ refers to marriages conducted for a short period, and the word ‘early’ refereeing to marriages at early ages. Negative lexicalization is also used concerning the state of the country as being in “ongoing conflict and insecurity” which may imply a negative description of the government as failing in providing peace and security to its citizens. The fact that girls got married for financial reasons is described, with the use of modality, as being a probable situation, that is, true in most cases. To further enhance the negative presentation of the country, comes the phrase “Lack of access to education and economic opportunities” in which marriage is seen as the only way for women to have financial support due to their inability to education or work. In the argumentation for the economic reasons behind early marriages, an estimate is given as evidence to prove this fact. It suggests that more than half of these marriages are done for the sake of having financial security. Trying to describe another kind of forced marriage, the report goes on to define what is called ‘fasliyya.’ Such definition is part of the description and helps in emphasising the coercion experienced by women who marry in this
way. Then, another estimate done by the government is used to reveal the number of these marriages. This estimate is employed to give evidence of the high rate of these marriages.

This extract makes use of different ideological strategies, starting with authority which is manipulated through the use of estimates done by the UNICEF, thus, helping to give reliability, since the information exposed is based on international facts rather than beliefs. Speaking of early marriages suggests the use of categorization as an important strategy in which the topic focuses on people under the age of 14. Burden as an ideological strategy is also used in describing the way poor people think of their daughters and therefore, marriage is seen as the only way to get rid of such financial burden. On the contrary, the report makes use of victimization, since women are presented as victims that are forced into such marriages either by their families or by their inability to be educated or have financial security. To give more credibility to the facts that are given in this extract, the writer depends on estimates, and therefore, the number game functions as the main strategy.

**Extract 4**

Response by the government of Iraq

The Iraqi government notes in its report to the Committee that the Personal Status Code (1959) protects against forced and early marriages. However, the Personal Status Code allows youth as young as 15-years-old to marry with a judge’s authorization. While forced marriages may be declared null and void under the Personal Status Code, this is only true if the marriage has not been consummated, providing further consequences for survivors of marital rape. As recently as January 2017 members of the Council of Representatives in Iraq submitted amendments to the Personal Status Code that would have lowered the age of marriage. This followed a similar unsuccessful attempt to amend the Personal Status Code in 2014 to set the legal age for marriage as nine for girls and allow for temporary marriages. Advocates fear that similar amendments may arise again in parliament. The Penal Code does not contain provisions that offer protection for women who decide to turn to the courts, leaving them vulnerable to further discrimination or attacks by members of their families or communities. (Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Iraq, 2019, p.4)

This text starts with reference to the government’s response which is given in the active construction, drawing the focus on the agent and also presupposes the fact that a periodic report is submitted by the government to the Committee. the government’s response concerning women from early marriages is followed by a contrast in which the court may allow the marriage of 15 years old person. This contradiction contributes to the negative description of the Iraqi Personal Status Law for allowing early marriages. In terms of modality, the marriage of 15 years old people is described as being permitted. The words ‘null’ and ‘void’ are both important in reflecting the way the government and the law protect women from forced marriages, however, this protection is conditioned on whether the marriage has been consummated or not. Therefore, the report shows that though the government has protected women from forced marriage, it has failed to protect them from marital rape. Yet, the report, in this way, ignores Article 40/4 of the same law which allows separation for both spouses if the marriage has been conducted outside the court and has been consummated. Article 41 gives further explanation of the way the two spouses can be
separated. This is followed by the possibility of lowering the age of marriage due to certain suggested amendments. Mentioning these suggested amendments in the parliament presupposes the acceptability of such marriages even by people of high education and who work in high positions. Such acceptability leads to show the government as one of the reasons behind the prevalence of early marriages and such description is taken a further step by mentioning another attempt to lower the age of marriage to nine.

A negative description of the Iraqi law continues by mentioning the fact that the Penal Code does not protect women who turn to the courts. The report stresses the idea that victims of such kinds of marriages are left with no legal protection. Such a negative description is further enhanced with the term ‘vulnerable.’ This is followed by the use of a focused structure in which the reason behind women’s inability to have legal remedies is given first in the sentence, therefore focusing on the fact that many of these marriages are conducted outside the court. One can also notice the use of the phrase “unwanted marriage” as a euphemism instead of ‘forced marriage’ at the end of the extract.

The extract starts with using illegality as one of the main strategies in describing the way the government deals with early marriages which are declared as being illegal in the Iraqi Personal Code. However, the fact that a person 15 years old can marry with the court’s authorization leads to a strategy of legality. Such explanation is given in terms of disclaimer since it mentions the good side of the law and then immediately focuses on its bad side. Counterfactual is given as an ideological strategy followed by the government in dealing with forced marriages since they are declared null and void only if the marriage is not consummated. The report depends heavily on negative other-presentation, this can be traced in the way members of parliament who suggest amendments to lower the age of marriage are presented. This strategy leads to polarization of the US and THEM. This strategy becomes clear in using the phrase “Advocates fear that similar amendments may arise again in parliament” in which advocates for women’s rights represent the ingroup and the government (especially those who demand amendments) are seen as the outgroup. Manipulating victimization strategy, the report focuses extensively on women as being victims and unable to have legal rights that can protect them from these marriages. They get into unwanted marriages outside the courts which cannot be proved. This also suggests empathy as another strategy in viewing women as vulnerable to discrimination.

Extract 5

“II. Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Crimes Committed by ISIL (Articles 2, 3, 5, 6, & 15)

Background on ISIL Gender-Based Crimes: Rape, Torture and Murder Based on Prescribed Gender Roles

Under ISIL occupation in Iraq, women, girls, men and boys including LGBTIQ persons, and those otherwise perceived as stepping outside of traditional gender roles were targeted for violence on a staggering scale. ISIL fighters tortured women doctors and nurses who have not complied with rigid dress codes when doing so interfered with the performance of their medical duties. They have executed women who resisted forced marriage or who served as politicians. Men believed to be gay have been thrown off buildings. Women believed to be lesbians have been issued death warrants. ISIL has killed youth because of
their alternative forms of personal expression or refusal to join their militia, labeling them “faggots.” Men who could not or would not grow beards were tortured. These crimes are evidence of systematic persecution of persons based on gender. (Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Iraq, 2019, p.6)

This extract, as its title suggests, is dedicated to crimes committed by ISIL. The extract starts with *fronting* the adverbial clause “Under ISIL occupation in Iraq” drawing attention to the time of occupation. This also *presupposes* knowledge about the ISIL occupation of certain governorates in Iraq. It states that people of all genders were targeted for violence. This type of violence is described as being cruel through the use of a “staggering scale.” This is taken as *argumentation* for which different examples will be mentioned to prove and confirm. The first argument regards women doctors and nurses who were tortured. The use of the verb ‘tortured’ suggests an extremely negative presentation of ISIL and its domination over people’s lives. The fact that women were tortured for not wearing rigid dresses implicate the conservative nature of this force. This brutality is further emphasised by the verb “executed” which is mentioned in relation to women resisting forced marriages. ISIL here is viewed and conceptualized as a patriarchal community that rules by force and domination. ISIL crimes are viewed as being based on suspicions in dealing with LGBTIQ people. The use of the verb phrase ‘believed to be’ suggested that. The way they deal with boys refusing to join their militia is either by killing them or stigmatizing them with words of negative impressions. The extract gives a *precise description* of ISIL crimes emphasising its *negative other-presentation* and the way it is perceived by the NGOs. Speaking of modality which is deontic in this extract in referring to many things as *forbidden*, including the right to dress the way people like the right to marry, sexual rights, and other forms of personal expression.

A recurrent ideological strategy is that of *humanitarianism* which is present in every violation of human rights mentioned in the extract. This is manipulated through another strategy of *illustration* in which each crime mentioned represents an illustration of the human rights violation. Furthermore, each example of the crime depends heavily on *categorization*. Different categories are mentioned: men, women, boys, girls, doctors, nurses, and the LGBTIQ community. In addition to that, one cannot deny *victimization* which accompanies all the examples given about ISIL gender-based crimes.

**Extract 6**

ISIL employed sexual violence as a strategic weapon and “as a tactic of terror, a core element of their ideology and modus operandi.” ISIL subjected Yazidi, Muslim, Christian and Turkmen women in Iraq to human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence. ISIL fighters executed at least 2,000 Yazidis, both men and women, and captured another 6,417. Yazidi women were subjected to imprisonment, organized rape, sexual slavery, sexual assault, torture, forced marriage, and forced labor. Women were forced to convert to Islam or risk being killed if they refused, and children were forced to take up arms and fight. Girls under 8 years old were allowed to remain with their mothers, while any girls older than 8 were removed from their families and held captive under ISIL control. Victims witnessed widespread killing and executions, were deprived of food, and beaten throughout their period of captivity. (Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Iraq, 2019, p.7)
This extract is concerned with sexual violence employed by ISIL. The extract starts by explaining the way ISIL employed sexual violence by using metaphor in which sexual violence is described as a ‘strategic weapon’ and ‘tactic of terror.’ This is done to emphasise the prevalence of sexual abuse in ISIL human rights violations. Using the verb ‘subjected’ illustrate ISIL’s action in dealing with women of different religious backgrounds. They are mentioned precisely to shed light on the idea that women were abused not because of their religion but because of their gender. This is given as argumentation and is followed by evidence to demonstrate it. An estimate done by the UNAMI about executions and arrests of Yazidi people can serve as evidence to emphasise the violence. It helps to show that what is stated about violence is given in terms of facts rather than opinions or beliefs. In this way, violence experienced by Yazidi women has specified in which the writer mentions their exposure to different kinds of abuse, including: “imprisonment, organized rape, sexual slavery, sexual assault, torture, forced marriage, and forced labor.”

To mention that women experienced coercion to change their religion and boys are forced to fight, illustrates much about ISIL ideology in dealing with people. They relied on force to make people do what they believe to be right. This negative view of ISIL continues to be a recurrent image by stressing their violence. Later on, girls’ right to be with their mothers is described, in terms of modalities, as being either permitted for those under 8 or forbidden for those older than 8. Killings and executions are consistently repeated, but this time in relation to Yazidi captivates. Evidentiality is maintained by another estimate which is concerned with Yazidi people who were able to escape and those who are missing. The phrase “half still missing and unaccounted for” implicates the government’s inability to respond to this violation even after the end of the occupation.

The text moves to speak of sexual enslavement which is described metaphorically as a ‘hallmark policy.’ The fact that women were sold implicates the way ISIL objectivizes women, treating them as unhuman who can be bought and sold. This abuse is described in detail by mentioning the prices for buying women according to their ages.

Ideologically, this extract manifests humanitarianism as an overall strategy since human rights are violated in different forms. The report consistently makes use of estimates done by an international organization, in this extract UNAMI, to suggest authority, that is, the given information is taken from a firm base and therefore they are fact. Women are categorized according to their ages. This is mentioned in relation to the way ISIL dealt with captive girls so that those who are older than 8 years are taken from their families to be a wife of an ISIL fighter. This categorization is also mentioned in illustrating the system of profit where women are bought and sold again. The two estimates provided about the number of Yazidi people who were captivated relate to the number game strategy. One may assume the use of financial burden as another strategy that ISIL held in dealing with women who were forced into sexual enslavement to get profit. Two strategies that are seen as prevailing in the extract are those of negative other-presentation and victimization. ISIL is described negatively in mentioning its oppression of women and other crimes. This leads to viewing women as victims that were exposed to different human rights violations.
Response by the government of Iraq

Though the Iraqi government acknowledges the sexual and gender-based violence that some women faced under ISIL, particularly the targeting of Yazidi women, it has not acknowledged nor provided accountability for ISIL crimes amounting to gender-based persecution. Nor have they acknowledged such crimes committed against LGBTI persons. Without acknowledgement and accountability for the full range of crimes and the gender discriminatory basis on which many of them were committed, justice cannot be obtained for victims and communities cannot rebuild. The government of Iraq should acknowledge crimes committed by ISIL if it hopes to support its citizens in creating sustainable peace. (Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Iraq, 2019, p.9)

From the beginning, the writer makes use of focus structure by fronting the embedded clause first. This is mainly done to show a contrast between the two clauses in which the first one is given as an opinion respecting the government’s movement, then contrasting it with the second clause which acknowledges the fact that the government has failed in dealing with ISIL gender-based oppression. The fact that the government did not acknowledge crimes committed against LGBT persons comes from the fact that Iraqi society, based on its shared beliefs, refuses to acknowledge people of gender minorities. The writer depends on international beliefs about human rights, giving no account to their religious and social denial of them. Later on, the writer relies on nominalization to draw attention to the way GBV should be addressed with both ‘acknowledgment’ and ‘accountability.’ Drawing on modalities, the writer tries to show the impossibility of obtaining justice for victims and the impossibility of building communities without addressing gender-based crimes.

It is noticed that the writer utilized a disclaimer, as an ideological strategy, from the beginning. The extract starts by mentioning the good point about the government’s response to sexual and GBV encountered by some women, then focuses exclusively on the government’s ignorance of other crimes. This also emphasizes the negative other-presentation since it reveals the crimes that the government has failed to acknowledge. The writer moves then to stress the need for justice to end gender discrimination. This employs humanitarianism as another important ideological strategy.

Discussion

Concerning the first question of the study, the analysis has shown that forms of violence, their prevalence in Iraq, and the government’s failure to respond to violence stand as the main discourse topics that are expressed in the report. Regarding the second question, the analysis has shown that the report stresses the use of authority and evidentiality to show power relations. In addition, there is active construction that is used to shed light on the government’s insufficiency in dealing with violence. Contrast is emphasized to draw attention to the difference between what is said about violence and what is there in reality. Concerning the third question, the report utilizes different ideological strategies that are all based on the polarization of Us and Them in which the report emphasizes the positive characteristics of the NGOs and the negative characteristics of the government. In relation to the last question, the analysis has revealed that the report has shown negative attitudes regarding the government and the governmental institutions including the legal
system of the country, arguing that a better understanding and getting access to the provisions stated to secure and protect Iraqi women's rights are worth mentioning.

Conclusion

The current study provides a critical discourse analysis of an NGOs’ report tackling the controversial issue of violence against women in Iraq. The study adopted van Dijk’s (2011; 2000) models of socio-cognitive approach and ideological model to examine the ideological attitudes hidden in the selected text under investigation. Therefore, the NGOs' report attempts to reflect the ideological position of the NGOs towards the Iraqi government which declared its rejection of the violence against women through its constitution and Panel Code. Despite this, the researchers found that there is no real adoption of these provisions in reality in its social context. Using the linguistic and discoursal strategies employed in the analysis, the researchers have found that the report has materialized a negative perspective towards the government and society through power dominance which is exercised by social groups and this is in line with van Dijk's (1993) view on the one hand. On the other hand, the report shows a victimized view toward Iraqi Women in such a patriarchal society in which social norms are dominated. Another point is that Iraqi women are subjected to much non-State violence such as ISIS in which they experienced many severe forms of violence. The researchers hope that such a study may raise the awareness of the Iraqi government to constitute a rule for protecting women's rights and to terminate violence against them as the one constituted in Kurdistan Iraq. In addition, the theoretical framework employed in this study can contribute to the existing literature in CDA research. Thus, the last conclusion shows that women’s rights as stated in the Iraqi Constitution are marginalized and are not supported by the Panel Code. This literature has shown that the mass media plays the important role in the production of belief, and prejudice and the dominance of the social context tend to marginalize others and misinterpret an event.

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EFL Learners’ Perspectives of E-Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Study on Saudi College Students

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Abstract
The learning process during Covid-19 pandemic has witnessed significant changes in the modes of instruction, with E-learning emerging as an absolute path in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The current study seeks to investigate the perspectives of Saudi EFL students with regard to e-learning during the pandemic and the challenges encountered. The significance of this study stems from the importance of integrating e-learning into language learning in a methodological way with the proper planning of activities, technologies, and tutors and students’ skills. The participants of this study consisted of Saudi EFL learners in two Saudi universities, namely King Saud University and King Khalid University, who study in the department of English language. The sample consisted of (53) students who study in their fourth year and who were selected randomly from the department of English language. The research results demonstrated that the perceptions of the students of e-learning during the Covid-19 pandemic were positive because they see that e-learning makes learning easier, especially in the student-instructor interaction, as well as using various teaching styles and assessment methods and they participated in making the students prefer e-learning in their future education. However, the students reported that they do not have all the technical skills needed for e-learning and that they face technical problems and a lack of social relations during online learning. Based on these results, the researcher recommended training the students on e-learning skills and platforms and providing them with the required technologies for the effective adoption of e-learning.

Keywords: EFL learners’ perspectives, e-learning, covid-19 pandemic, Saudi students, online learning

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Introduction

Significant changes have occurred in the educational field, with the e-learning emerging as the basic learning mode in all instructional institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic. This occurrence has made the transition to e-learning an obligation since each school and university must follow in order to deliver its classes and continue teaching its students. Several applications and platforms have come into scene as significant e-learning tools, especially Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, ZOOM, and etc. (Alsuhaibani, 2021).

In fact, e-learning is a beneficial learning mode, especially in the language learning arena. Hjeltnes and Hansson (2004) reported that e-learning is an interactive learning environment that employs web technology, combines the advantages of electronic content management systems and social networks and enables learners to publish lessons and goals, set assignments, apply educational activities, and communicate with teachers through multiple techniques (Long, 2004). Also, it provides opportunities for individual education, suitable for all students who learn English as a second language, and this method enables students to discover their own educational methods (Soliman, 2014).

E-learning delivers considerable benefits to EFL learners (Abu-Ayfah, 2020). It is noticeable that the use of the English language by students will increase through exchanging opinions with their peers, joining educational and cultural language forums, and organizing meetings with other students using the English language through e-learning (Ahmad, 2020). E-learning gives EFL students the opportunity to use the language. Therefore, their self-confidence empowers them with the language and works on the rapid growth of their language competence and on the development of their vocabulary. When students have the opportunity to interact using e-learning, the student’s four language skills are developed (Layali & Al-Shlowiy, 2020).

In Saudi Arabia, with the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic, the transition towards e-learning has been unprecedented. By the start of March 2020, all the universities started to use e-learning platforms and virtual classes to deliver learning. The blackboard, Zoom, Google Classrooms, Webex, Edmodo, and WhatsApp were the most prominent e-learning tools adopted in Saudi universities (Alsuhaibani, 2021).

Like all other countries, Saudi Arabia has taken major steps toward e-learning during the pandemic, especially at the university stage. The learning process was majorly based on online platforms and applications that support language learning and education (Alkinani, 2021). Although the introduction of e-learning is not new in the Saudi educational system, but the learning experience during the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the whole learning process and inserted new insights for each of the universities, teachers, and students. Therefore, the e-learning process during the pandemic was viewed differently. The present study focuses on considering the Saudi EFL students’ perspectives of e-learning during the pandemic in order to elicit how useful was the experience, the challenges encountered, and the best ways that can be introduced to improve the practice.

Despite the benefit of e-learning in the educational process, several studies reported that EFL teachers and students have various perspectives on the experience of e-learning in language
learning (Hakim, 2020; Asseel, 2014; Tawalbeh, 2018; Fageeh, 2015; Al; Mohsen & Shafeeq, 2011; Fageeh, 2011; I'Hassan & Shukri, 2017). Furthermore, Mohsen and Shafeeq (2011) concluded that EFL teachers and students see that the Blackboard is a beneficial e-learning tool in motivating EFL students and enhancing their classroom interaction.

Although online learning systems have benefits in the educational system, the use of e-learning in language learning encounters some challenges. These challenges include connection problems (Alshehri & Cumming, 2020), personal devices problems (Hakami, 2020), privacy issues (Sharma, 2019), technical difficulties (Al Shlowiy et al., 2021), and lack of technical skills (Oyaid & Alshaya, 2019). Also, it was reported that some EFL teachers resist the use of e-learning in language learning classes, especially in sharing files, presenting materials, and in making assignments and educational activities (Al Shlowiy & Layali, 2020).

In light of the current status of e-learning in Saudi Arabia, and in consideration of these efforts, learners could resist the change and display a negative attitude (Sharma, 2019). EFL learners have different perspectives towering using e-learning depending on the instructors’ ability to design and implement online classes (Bousbahi & Alrazgan, 2015). Still, several teachers prefer using traditional learning media than online learning and that several EFL teachers and students lack the necessary skills and knowledge of e-learning particularly if they are unable to exchange ideas, increase their knowledge, and boost their skills (Al Shlowiy, A., Al-Hoorie, A., & Alharbi, M., 2021).

Since the beginning of the period of school suspension in Saudi Arabia, the MoE has worked hard to efficiently adapt the educational system to distance learning. In fact, distance learning is not new to Saudi Arabia (Oraif & Elyas, 2021). Saudi universities adopted a comprehensive e-learning system. For example, King Saud University and King Khalid University introduced the Excellence in E-learning Program and Award in order to enhance the learning process for both the students and instructors. The Excellence in E-learning Program achieved premium results in terms of delivering quality learning, overcoming the problem of grades inflation, and making both students and teachers competent in online learning tools and materials. However, it was shown that the students at the universities came across some challenges and their perceptions constitute a major step towards the future orientation of using e-learning in the university. Therefore, this study examines the Saudi EFL students’ perspectives of e-learning during the pandemic.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most learning schemes worldwide have been transferred to online. Learners who previously engaged in traditional learning now face a new challenge, a distinctive rise in e-learning. That drastic change could impact their learning behavior and acceptance of the change. As a result, the learning engagement could be affected massively (Oraif & Elyas, 2021).

The students’ perceptions of e-learning are a prerequisite to improve the language learning process in order to identify the students’ preferences and the barriers that face students while learning. As indicated by Al Shlowiy (2021), e-learning is the future of education in Saudi
universities and a major part of Saudi Vision 2030 and the interest in e-learning is a big concern to deliver highly competent learners who are linguistically robust and cross-culturally players.

The results of this study shall provide valuable insights to all Saudi universities about the students’ views of e-learning, the valuable benefits and challenges demonstrated during EFL learning during the pandemic and the possible ways to enhance the integration of e-learning in the curriculum, teachers’ preparation programs, the classroom activities, and the technological plans to enhance the learning process.

**Literature Review**

E-learning is a self-learning process through computers, tablets or mobile phones, whether through an internet connection or through Compacts Desks (CDs), and this process lets the learner to learn anytime and anywhere (Anas, 2020). Displaying texts, audio clips, videos, animations and virtual environments create a very rich learning environment that can outperform the traditional classroom learning environment (Hakami, 2020).

E-learning is an interactive system of education provided to the learner using communication and information technologies and is based on an integrated digital electronic environment that displays courses via electronic networks, provides ways of direction and guidance, organizes exams as well as evaluates and manages resources and processes (Long, 2004).

In addition, Khafaga (2021) defined e-learning as a self-learning method that connects the learners and teacher through computers or smart phones so that they can communicate at any place and time. This method uses various effective means and technologies such as videos, audio clips, virtual environments, etc., and is divided into three basic types, namely synchronous learning, asynchronous learning, and blended learning.

E-learning is based on the philosophy of distance learning that is based on self-learning for learners, that is, transforming the education process into learning that type of education in which the learner is highly self-reliant, and in which the direct relationship between the teacher and the learner is absent, and here the role of the communicative mediator is growing in achieving skills necessary for the learning process which is represented in the Internet with its advanced characteristics (Hjeltnes & Hansson, 2004). According to Long (2004), e-learning is characterized by being cost-effective, flexible in time and place, easy to use and learn, and controlled management.

There are a number of studies based on the significance and efficacy of the implementation of e-learning (Alkinani, 2021; Tawalbeh, 2018). Many universities across the world are promoting it as a teaching method and it is being widely appreciated by the learners. There are several reasons for its overall acceptability such as its flexibility, better control over the environment, and ease of utilization (Ahmad, 2020). On the other hand, e-learning was reported to be criticized for being encouraging isolation and lack of teacher-learner interaction (Abbasi, S., Ayoob, T., Malik, A., & Memon, S. I., 2020).
Pratiwi & Kurniati (2022) examined the EFL students’ views of e-learning in the university during the pandemic of Covid-19. The results showed that the students supported e-learning due to its cost, flexibility, efficiency, and confidence. Khalil & Alharbi (2022) examined EFL teachers’ views of e-learning platforms during Covid-19, especially Zoom, Blackboard, and Google Classroom. It is shown that Google Classroom is the most effective platform for EFL learning, then Blackboard and Zoom. Haque (2022) compared Saudi EFL learners’ and instructors’ perceptions in terms of online writing instruments during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was shown that online writing tools are beneficial in improving vocabulary, minimizing grammatical errors, and enhancing spelling. Also, online writing tools were associated with more confidence from the part of the students.

In Saudi Arabia, researchers such as Hakim (2020), Anas (2020), Almekhlafy (2020), and Al-Nofaie (2020) investigated the employment of online learning during the pandemic in educational contexts. Almekhlafy (2020) concluded that the first-year college students do not have a favorable perception of e-learning and the blackboard system during the pandemic and that the students lack major technical skills of e-learning in addition to the connection problems that disturb the e-learning during the pandemic. Al-Nofaie (2020) reported that EFL students still prefer traditional learning, but they perceive e-learning in a positive way during its flexibility. Furthermore, Khafaga (2021) reported that both learners and teachers are prone to use e-learning due to easiness of use, enhanced interaction, and better evaluation and testing mechanisms.

Alsuhaibani (2021) concluded that the Saudi EFL students supported the use of blackboard during the pandemic in the Saudi universities due to the flexibility, the time and place control, the easiness of uploading and downloading documents, and the ability to post and ask questions easily, and the ability to submit assignments and presentations without more guidance from the instructor.

Prior studies investigated that there is a positive attitude toward e-learning implementation by undergraduate students, academic members, and organizational staff. According to Hussain et al. (2018), tracking student engagement in different educational learning activities, e-learning encourages high-quality learning and comprehensive analysis of student engagement can help to minimize course dropout rates. Technology in general and most particularly e-learning provides this opportunity for foreign language learners to have a flexible learning platform.

The results of AlKinani (2021) revealed that Saudi students in the college positively perceived online learning as the reasonable cost, flexibility, and richness of information. Also, the students favored the online class activities, but they were less favorable of the connection problems, the delayed feedback, and the lack of motivation and isolation.

Based on the studies (Jebreen, 2017; Hussain et al., 2018; Al-Azawei et al., 2016; O'Doherty et al., 2018), the barriers are commonly related to the new e-learning modules, students' anxiety within an unfamiliar e-learning platform, and the alignment of e-learning within the contexts of teaching and learning. Besides, lack of technical supports, ICT skills, and lack of infrastructure is considered to be the major obstacles to e-learning implantation.
Yet, some studies found that e-learning is perceived differently by teachers and students. Tawalbeh (2018) stated that teachers’ use of e-learning is limited despite the conviction of its capabilities and flexibility. Also, Al IHassan and Shukri (2017) reported that students are satisfied with e-learning and the easy access to materials, activities, exercises, and evaluation. But, Soliman (2014) concluded that e-learning has some limitations such as lack of interaction, deceased social relations, and technical problems.

Despite acceptance among many Saudis, the culture of e-learning still presents a considerable challenge that must be addressed. There is major controversy surrounding online learning and its benefits for Saudi learners. Al Shlowiy (2021) stated that Saudi EFL students, during Covid-19- based e-learning process, faced a number of challenges represented mainly by the sudden shift to e-learning in the Saudi universities.

According to Kisanga and Ireson (2015), successful e-learning implementation is a means to solve the authentic concerns of teaching and learning. This affirmation supports the idea that empowering e-learning implementations particularly in EFL education is also a means. According to Rahim and Sandaran (2020), e-learning works as an effective approach for foreign language learning which integrates collaboration. This is not effectively possible without the enhancement of e-learning as an approach to pave the way for effective learning.

Methods

This study uses the descriptive analytical approach. The descriptive approach focuses on collecting data through describing the events and analyzing their components in order to give in-depth details about the topic being studied (Crowder et al., 2017).

Analytical research takes descriptive research one stage further by seeking to explain the reasons behind a particular occurrence by discovering causal relationships (Robson, 1993). Once causal relationships have been established, the search shifts to factors that can be changed (variables) in order to influence the chain of causality.

The present research describes and analyses Saudi EFL learners’ perceptions of e-learning during the pandemic. The research design constructed here is based on the questions formulated. These questions were raised from the literature and the researcher’s observation.

Participants

The population of this research consists of all Saudi EFL students who were studying during the pandemic in two Saudi universities, namely King Saud University and King Khalid University. The research population is those students who study at the English language department in each university in the fourth year whose number is (106). The target sample is (50%) of the research population. So, the sample size is (53) students, being selected randomly. Those who responded to the data collection tool with valid responses is (42) students with a response rate reaching to (79.2%).
Research Instruments

A closed questionnaire is used as the main data collection tool in this study. The research questionnaire is designed based on previous researches and studies. The questionnaire items were drafted based on the empirical research related to the EFL Learners’ perceptions of e-learning during the pandemic. The questionnaire tools were applied as they fit to collect data from a large sample and can be responded easily by the participants without place and time restrictions (Girko, 2018).

The research questionnaire consists of (25) items that address the EFL learners’ perceptions of e-learning during pandemic and the challenges encountered. The questionnaire is distributed on the research sample and the responses are gathered within one week.

The rating scale used in this questionnaire is Likert scale that has five ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was written in the English language. The questionnaire was self-administered and distributed personally to the participants.

The participants of the research were made aware of the research objectives and their approval to participate in the study was ensured. In addition, the participants were informed that their responses will be used for the research purposes only and will not affect them in any aspect. Moreover, the confidentiality of the data is ensured.

Validity and Reliability

The researcher achieved the face validity of the questionnaire by verifying that the questionnaire measures what it is intended to measure. The questionnaire has been made available to a number of judges who are majored in EFL. In light of the comments and remarks provided by the judges, the researcher has modified the questionnaire and rephrased the items that need more clarity and relevance to the intended goal.

Reliability is concerned with the consistency of findings (Girko, 2018). The researcher has used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and the findings are shown in table one as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>.869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, Cronbach's Alpha for all the items of the questionnaire is (.869) and it is a high reliability value. The questionnaire is then considered a reliable tool.

Statistical Tools

Selecting the proper statistical methods depends on the nature of the data and the relationship between the method and the research objective (Girko, 2018). As such, this study used what is relevant to the research question and framework. The main data analysis techniques used in the research are as follows: mean, percentage, standard deviation, frequency, and order of mean scores.
Research Procedures

The researchers started by collecting the theoretical information of the study by reviewing many of the relevant research articles and publications. Then, the researcher designed the questionnaire based on the literature review and the research questions. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire are verified by the appropriate statistical methods. The researchers distributed the questionnaire on the research participants and got their responses personally. The researcher finalized data collection and put the results for analysis.

Results

This part presents the findings of the study. As the main data collection tool in this research is the questionnaire, this research seeks present the participants’ responses to the items of the questionnaire. In the below part, the findings related to students’ perceptions of e-learning during Covid-19 pandemic are presented. The responses are shown in table two:

Table 2. Students’ responses to the questionnaire items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-learning makes the learning process easier.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Teacher interaction during isolation has increased</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I interact with my classmates through the available communication tools.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel satisfied with the knowledge acquired during the e-learning process.</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel satisfied with the skills acquired during the e-learning process.</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel satisfied with the development of my experience in performing various activities on the Blackboard.</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel satisfied with my academic Grade Point Average (GPA) during the e-learning process.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I generally recommend the implementation of the e-learning process in the post-pandemic period.</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher motivates me to participate actively during the e-learning process.</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher helps me overcome the technical problems in the e-learning process.</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher encourages me to become actively involved during the e-learning process.</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The course content on the Blackboard LMS is well-organized.</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have all the technological skills needed for e-learning.</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teacher applies various teaching styles and assessment methods. % 6.3 16.3 25.8 29.7 21.9 3.45 1.18 4
The technological devices are expensive for me. % 6.3 18.0 25.5 31.1 19.0 3.38 1.17 9
I feel satisfied with the university’s support when I face technical problems during e-learning. % 5.1 22.1 24.6 26.3 21.9 3.38 1.19 10
I feel satisfied with the speed of the internet connection during the e-learning process. % 4.4 21.4 26.5 29.0 18.7 3.36 1.14 12
I feel satisfied with the university instructions on how to perform the e-learning process. % 9.5 14.4 26.5 32.6 17.0 3.33 1.19 16
I feel satisfied with the university academic e-services during the e-learning process. % 8.5 24.3 24.6 20.2 22.4 3.24 1.18 24
Repetitive technical problems occur during e-learning sessions. % 5.4 23.6 24.1 24.6 22.4 3.35 1.21 13
Some lessons need to be explained face-to-face. % 4.9 22.9 22.1 26.0 24.1 3.42 1.22 7
I sometimes feel lost and confused during e-learning sessions. % 7.3 22.6 28.0 24.1 18.0 3.23 1.20 25
E-learning does not enhance my social relations with my classmates and teachers. % 3.4 25.8 20.0 26.0 24.8 3.43 1.21 5
E-teaching is better than traditional teaching. % 8.0 21.7 26.5 23.4 20.4 3.27 1.23 21
E-learning is my future learning preference. % 4.4 26.8 19.7 20.7 28.5 3.42 1.27 6

Table two shows the responses of Saudi EFL students to the questionnaire items that check their perceptions of e-learning during the pandemic. The total mean is (3.36) and the SD is (1.16) which means that the students have moderate perceptions towards the items of the questionnaire and that there are some items that are highly approved by the students and other items that are moderately approved by the students.

Out of the (25) items, there are (7) items that are highly agreed by the students and got the highest mean scores, ranging between (3.76 – 3.42). These (7) items are “I do not have all the technological skills needed for e-learning” with a mean (3.76), “E-learning makes the learning process easier” with a mean (3.36), “Student-Teacher interaction during isolation has increased” with a mean (3.55), “The teacher applies various teaching styles and assessment methods” with a mean (3.45), “E-learning does not enhance my social relations with my classmates and teachers” with a mean (3.43), “E-learning is my future learning preference” with a mean (3.42), and “Some lessons need to be explained face-to-face” with a mean (3.42).

These findings show that the students’ perceptions of e-learning during Covid-19 pandemic are positive because they see that e-learning makes learning easier especially in the interaction in the class, using various teaching styles and assessment methods and that the students prefer e-learning in their future education. However, the students reported that the do not have all the technological skills needed for e-learning.
The results also show that all the other items of the questionnaire got a moderate mean score ranging from (3.38 – 3.23), meaning that the students are average with regard to these items with varying degrees. The most prominent items agreed by the students are: “I interact with my classmates through the available communication tools” with a mean (3.39), “I feel satisfied with the university’s support when I face technical problems during e-learning” with a mean (3.38), “I feel satisfied with the knowledge acquired during the e-learning process” with a mean (3.36), “I feel satisfied with the speed of the internet connection during the e-learning process” with a mean (3.36), “I feel satisfied with my academic GPA during the e-learning process” with a mean (3.33), “I generally recommend the implementation of the e-learning process in the post-pandemic period” with a mean (3.33), “I feel satisfied with the university instructions on how to perform the e-learning process” with a mean (3.33), “I feel satisfied with the skills acquired during the e-learning process” with a mean (3.32), “I feel satisfied with the development of my experience in performing various activities on the Blackboard” with a mean (3.31), “The teacher motivates me to participate actively during the e-learning process” with a mean (3.29), and “The teacher helps me overcome the technical problems in the e-learning process” with a mean (3.27).

The above findings show, to a moderate extent, that e-learning helped students to interact with their classmates, that the students are satisfied with university’s support when they face technical problems during e-learning, satisfied with the knowledge acquired during the e-learning process, satisfied with the speed of the internet connection during the e-learning process, with their GPA, satisfied with the university instructions on how to perform the e-learning, and satisfied with their experience. Also, the students reported that the teacher motivates them to learn and helps them to overcome any problems.

These findings show that the most prominent challenges encountered by Saudi EFL students during Covid-19 pandemic in e-learning are their insufficient knowledge of technological skills, lack of support for social relations with classmates and teachers, some lessons need to be explained face-to-face and not online, technological devices are expensive for the students, the occurrence of technical problems repeatedly, and that students may get lost and confused during online sessions.

Discussion

How do Saudi EFL students at Saudi universities perceive e-learning during the Covid-19 pandemic? The findings of this study demonstrated that Saudi EFL students have positive perceptions of e-learning during the pandemic even though there are some challenges experienced by the learners during the online learning. E-learning offers an engaging and a motivating platform to the students through its audio, video, animation, and its interactive features which allow the teachers and students to interact well with each other and that the students become active and positive in the learning process. These findings are consistent with the findings of Abbasi et al (2020) and AlKinani (2021) who reported that e-learning is an interactive facility that transfers the learning from a teacher-centered mode to a learner-centered mode, thus ensuring that the learners participate, cooperate, and become involved in class assignments, presentations, and activities.

Positive perceptions towards e-learning were showed by Saudi EFL learners because it makes learning easier than the traditional learning mode and that the teacher can use different
teaching methods and assessment approaches. This result matches with the findings of both Almekhlafy (2020) and Al-Nofaie (2020) who informed that e-learning is preferred by EFL students because e-learning cares for the different learning styles of the students and that the students can be given immediate feedback to their performance in the class. Furthermore, Alshehri and Cumming (2020) supported this finding since e-learning minimized EFL students’ anxiety and reluctance to speak in the class where the students become in a motivating and tension-free environment where all can speak, ask, discuss, and answer without fear or hesitation.

In Saudi context, traditional approaches for teaching and learning EFL led EFL education to teacher-dominated classrooms (Alsuhaibani, 2021), whereas technology attempts to transform this atmosphere into a more dynamic context. According to Layali and Al Shlowiy (2020) learners’ requirements changed since they are involved in these new technological innovations. However, paradigm-shifting in language teaching methodology is an issue for teachers. As Anas (2020) stated that EFL is transformed from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach.

Since the results of the current study showed that the e-learning enhanced the students’ motivation, the student’s interaction in the class, the students’ GPA, it is in agreement with Hakim (2020) which supported the impact of using social media applications in learning and recommended activation of these applications in English language learning.

Also, the Saudi EFL students showed that they are satisfied with the university instructions and support e-learning and happy with the knowledge and experience acquired during the online learning. Furthermore, as for EFL learners’ perceptions of e-learning are impacted by their enhanced interaction in the class and the tension-free environment in the online learning environment (Sharma, 2019; Rahim & Sandaran, 2020). E-learning is a new opportunity for Saudi EFL learners who need to be will equipped with the new technological skills and to be trained on how to submit and extract information from the platform (Rahim & Sandaran, 2020). EFL teachers should be provided with proper connections, infrastructure, and facilities in order to avoid the connection disruption and to be trained on the proper use of the online platforms (Khafaga, 2021).

In addition, the integration of online learning in language learning process implies that the language curriculum and activities should be tailored to suit the online mode of learning and that students and teachers find more able chance to interaction and to enjoy the learning process (Al-Nofaie, 2020).

What are the challenges of e-learning encountered by Saudi EFL students at Saudi universities during the Covid-19 pandemic?

The results also reveal some other issues that the learners faced, such as, the need for all online learning equipment, tools, systems, lack of social relations with the teachers and their classmates, the lack of digital skills in using the technological tools, etc. The findings of the present study corroborate the findings of previous research on the same issues about online learning during COVID-19, and the results revealed that learners are not happy with distance education and many obstacles have been encountered (Oraif & Elyas, 2021; Hakim, 2020; Anas, 2020).
This result is also consistent with Khafaga (2021) who stated that one of the barriers in online learning is technology among students and educators. This is a challenge because good lecturers have more excellent skills and know-how on information technology and can use more advanced technology architectures. In contrast, students have a lack of knowledge of basic information technology architectures.

Offering some online courses in most Saudi educational institutions before the COVID-19 pandemic has facilitated, supported, and provided an excellent opportunity for students and institutes to switch to online learning after the outbreak of this pandemic. However, in the beginning, most of the learners appeared online for the first time. In fact, they lacked the experience and confidence to learn online using a new medium. After some time, most learners could overcome most of the technical issues related to online learning platforms. However, the English language learning challenges are still problematic in e-learning (Alshehri & Cumming, 2020).

What are the possible solutions to enhance the adoption of e-learning at Saudi universities?

EFL students should be prepared to move to online learning (Abbasi et al., 2020). Engagement in online classes is the first task of EFL teachers who must be well trained and aware of the benefits of the platforms (Hakim, 2020). Teachers should well design their online classes with more attractive technologies and facilities in order to engage the emotions of their students (Rahim & Sandaran, 2020) and maximize the interaction chances (Layali & Al Shlowiy, 2020).

Conclusion

This study examined the perspectives of Saudi EFL students with regard to e-learning during the pandemic and the challenges encountered. The significance of this study stems from the importance of integrating e-learning into language learning in a methodological way with the proper planning of activities, technologies, and tutors and students’ skills. The results showed that Saudi EFL learners had positive perceptions of online learning applications during the COVID-19. They had good experiences and felt convenient in operating online learning applications. The learners expressed that e-learning made their learning easier and enhanced their interaction with their teachers and classmates. On the other hand, learners experienced some challenges such as their insufficient command of technological skills, technical problems during the sessions, the cost of technology, lack of social relations, and that the students may go lost during the online sessions. Therefore, lecturers should keep on using and maintaining the most popular and favorable online learning applications during distance learning so that all learners feel motivated and enjoyable, and they can keep having positive perceptions of taking online learning. It is recommended that further research should be undertaken to understand the teachers’ views and experiences towards online English language teaching during the pandemic.

Recommendations

Since the results of the study showed that e-learning is an important mode of instruction for EFL students, it is recommended to integrate e-learning into the EFL programs to be part and parcel of the learning process and not a supplementary element. EFL teachers should be trained on the designing of online learning classes, activities, assignments, and tests to be able to interact effectively with their online learners. EFL students need to be fully aware of the online platforms.
and all their components and facilities in order to know how to present their materials, make their assignments, interact with their teachers and peers, and to perform their tests. On the other hand, the universities must have the necessary infrastructure such as language labs and virtual classes and internet connections in order to facilitate the e-learning process.

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Thamer Binmahboob is specialized in teaching English as a second language for more than 18 years. His participation in conferences was related to applying technologies in the learning environment. His belief in the importance of integrating technologies with learning led him to develop an application on smartphones for learning writing.

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A Critical Stylistic Study of the Notion of Women Empowerment in the

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**Abstract**

This study unveils the ideologies of women empowerment encoded in the *Mona Lisa Smile* movie (2003). It reveals how the stereotypical image of women born only to be wives and do the duties of upbringing and housework is challenged. Katherine Ann Watson (Julia Roberts), the main character in the movie, wants to make a difference in the next generation of women. She rejects the imposed traditional ideologies. Linguistically, she opposes conventional thinking and seeks to persuade her students that life is about more than getting married. The primary focus of this study is to examine and clarify how the characters’ linguistic choices convey their ideologies concerning the notion of women empowerment. To do this, the researchers apply Jeffries’s (2010) critical stylistics, using five stylistic tools: Negation, Hypothesizing, Equating and Contrasting, Exemplifying and Enumerating, and lastly, Representing Actions/Events/States. The data for this study consists of four extracts taken from the movie *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003). The analysis shows that the critical stylistic tools account for a significant portion of the meaning of the text under consideration and contributes to the linguistic formulation of the notion of women empowerment, especially Negation and Hypothesizing processes, which score the highest frequencies while Exemplifying and Enumerating score the lowest.

**Keywords**: critical stylistics, ideology, *Mona Lisa Smile*, women empowerment

Introduction
Weakness has become a trait of women because of the increase in violence and negligence they are experiencing. As a result, the need for psychological and social support services to assist women in becoming more vigorous and active has increased. These supportive services have been spread through the media, newspaper articles, speeches, interviews, and even movies. *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) is one of these movies in which the theme of empowerment is highly noticeable. Researchers such as Mawarni (2017), Putri (2010), and Dewi (2009) have investigated some issues in the movie under study, such as art, occupation, education, society, identity, and culture. However, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, the role of ideologies in the discursive and social practices of women empowerment has not been tackled before. Therefore, this study will fill the gap in the literature by examining the linguistic choices that underpin women empowerment in the mentioned movie.

Literature Review
The Notion of Women Empowerment
In its broadest sense, the word "empowerment" has social, economic, cultural, and even political pivots. Therefore, it is defined differently by different scholars and researchers. Kabeer (2005) asserts that women empowerment refers to the process through which women gain the ability to make strategic life decisions in situations where they previously lacked this capacity. Empowerment, according to Narayan (2005), is the development of an individual’s assets and abilities to participate in, negotiate with, influence, manage, and hold institutions accountable for their lives. As for Sharma and Varma (2008), women empowerment is "a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in a woman’s life through which she increases her ability to shape her life and environment. It is an active, multidimensional process, which should enable women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life" (p.46).

Movies are entertainment media that represent socio-cultural behaviors and traditions based on various ideologies. They are merely reflections of society, to the extent that they may sometimes even influence or shape public opinion or the public’s world-view (Kidwai & Ahmad, 2016). Lewin (2012) states that in the new networked environment, the movie is an essential medium of documentation and expression.

Mitchell (2011) discusses the nearly sensory quality of the film:

The film is such a powerful medium to convey representations and to change, to mess, with representations. In three minutes, you can say something far more complex, deeply layered, and provocative to get people engaged, much more than an academic piece of writing. Because it touches on people’s feelings, puts people into a scene, and gets them to challenge their viewpoints (as cited in Lewin, 2012, p. 113).

As for the movie of *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003), it tackles the lives of women in 1953 and how women are viewed as objects with the primary aim of getting married and being excellent wives to their husbands. Katherine Ann Watson, a PhD student at Oakland State University, is employed as an art history lecturer at Wellesley College. Wellesley is a premier upper-crust university with staff,
students, and alumni who often look down on state universities. Katherine rapidly discovers that her academic credentials impact how her students see her. She also finds that the students are book-clever but lack critical-thinking skills. Their parents and the school administration encourage the girls to follow a predefined course in life, namely, to adhere to traditional beliefs to marry into a decent family. Katherine decides to impart her thoughts and ideologies about what is vital in learning to her students (Hamdan, 2005).

The *Mona Lisa Smile* has been tackled before to investigate different aspects of the movie. For example, a study entitled "An Analysis of Feminism in *Mona Lisa Smile* Movie Script" is carried out by Mawarni (2017). This research focuses on the feminist ideas included in the *Mona Lisa Smile* movie script. The purpose of the study is to determine how feminism is applied to the plot of the movie. Descriptive qualitative content analysis is used by the researcher. The study shows that the main character of *Mona Lisa Smile* adheres to feminist values.

Katherine`s Conflict of Interests in Mike Newell`s *Mona Lisa Smile*: A Psychoanalytic Approach is the title of Putri`s (2010) research project. The purpose of the study is to analyze the way Katherine`s conflict of interest manifests itself in Mike Newell`s *Mona Lisa Smile*. The researchers use a qualitative method that is based on psychoanalysis.

The research "A Cultural Study on Ideal Women in *Mona Lisa Smile*: (A Feminist Approach) " uses of the movie as its source of data. The researchers of this work are Dewi, Rita, and Hendro (2009). The analysis method is based on the semiotic analysis of the movie *Mona Lisa Smile* by Rolan Barthez, which is then used to identify and interpret the system of signs that are perceived in the film. This study employs a qualitative technique. The analysis is combined with gender theory and feminism. The writer discovers that every woman figure handles her challenge with a grin after researching statements, dialogues, and conduct. They appear to be robust and calm, as if nothing has happened. Therefore, this study is different from the previously mentioned studies in that it will fill the gap in the literature by investigating the ideologies revealed through linguistic choices.

**Critical Stylistics**

According to Halliday (1971), the major functions of language are 'ideational' (how language describes the world), 'interpersonal' (how language mediates between individuals), and 'textual' (how linguistic items make the discourse as a whole function). After that, Halliday (1978) proposed Critical Linguistics (CL), which argues that language reproduces dominant ideologies (Simpson & Mayr, 2010). Critical linguistics is a method of linguistic research that uses linguistic approaches to probe the ideologies that underpin texts (Carter & Simpson, 1989). The developments contributed by several researchers within critical linguistics have led to what is known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Fairclough`s (1989) *Language and Power* lays forth the framework, which follows CL´s methodological principles. The concerns are broadened by CDA to encompass contextual aspects such as historical, cultural, and sociocognitive factors. CDA and CL have a theoretical interest in analyzing ideological formations in texts and methodological concerns with language. Still, they differ in the rigor of their linguistic methodology and the multi-disciplinary nature of their theoretical foundations (Alaghbary et al., 2022). Jefferies (2010) suggests the critical stylistic approach in her book *Critical Stylistics: The Power of English* uses
Halliday’s first function, which elucidates how language is part of creating world-views. The method of critical stylistics is not a radical departure from CDA’s and CL’s critical practice; instead, it is a continuation of the tradition of examining the specific ways in which texts may transmit, reinforce, or inculcate ideologies in their readers (Jeffries, 2010). On the whole, critical stylistic analysis is an approach to language study by Jeffries, who merges stylistic analysis with critical discourse analysis. It has emerged as a reaction to critical discourse analysis since it does not provide a satisfactory set of analytical tools (Ahmed & Abbas, 2019, p. 88).

**Ideology**

Since critical stylistics is the adopted approach in this study, it is necessary to shed light on the term "ideology." The term "ideology" was first coined by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy in the eighteenth century as an alternative name for "the science of ideas." The term "ideology" is a buzzword that has different but overlapping shades of meaning across various fields (Alazzany, Alaghbary & Al-Nakeeb, 2015). Van Dijk (1998) argues that the term "ideology" can be defined in terms of three dimensions: sense, society, and discourse. This means that ideology can be defined as a set of beliefs perceived mentally and practiced socially by a group of people using a language. According to Fairclough (2003), ideologies are "interpretations of aspects of the world that help to build and sustain power, dominance, and exploitative relations." (p.9). They can be performed in modes of interaction and in ways of being identified. Simpson (2004) defines ideology as a set of beliefs through which we understand the world around us and interact with it.

According to Subramaniam (2008), the term "ideology" is "indeterminate and tricky" (p.40). He says that this has to do with how it is perceived: as all-encompassing or as merely addressing some aspects. He claims that "the theoretical constructs that relate to ideology and eventually give it its world-view are what he refers to as a shared or collective consciousness... a belief system" (p.40) that binds members of a specific group together. Ideology can take numerous forms, including collective consciousness, religion-related ideology, and ideology as manifested by power and dominance, which entails the study of ideology as a tool of domination in society.

**Methods**

The current study adopts a qualitative research method. In qualitative analysis, a text is employed as a tool to give an interpretation of social phenomena (Brikci & Judith, 2007). Besides, qualitative research deals with descriptive data, which means that the data are recorded in a non-numerical form (Tetnowski & Damcio, 2001). Even though the current study is qualitative, the researchers will add some tables for illustrative purposes.

**Sample of the Study**

After searching the net, the researchers have chosen the movie of *Mona Lisa Smile* for several reasons. First, it tackles the notion of women empowerment during a specific period. Secondly, the main characters of the movie mentioned above are all females, which serves the purpose of the analysis.

After choosing the movie, it has been watched several times by the researchers. Then, four extracts, due to some criteria, namely that the theme of empowerment is highly observed, and the five tools that can be applied to such selections, have been chosen for the analysis.
The Model Adopted

Jefferies (2010) makes use of Halliday’s classification by offering ten strategies for analyzing ideologically laden discourse critically. These tools are best understood in the context of the first metafunction, which explains how language represents the world. The tools are: Naming and Describing; Representing Actions/Events/states; Negating; Equating and Contrasting; Exemplifying and Enumerating; Prioritizing; Implying and Assuming; Hypothesizing; Presenting Other’s Speech, Though, and Writing; and Representing Time, Space and Society. The researchers use only five tools, which are elaborated on below.

Representing Actions/Events/States

The center of representing actions/events/states is the verbal component of the phrase in which the choice of verb impacts how readers and listeners perceive the information presented. Jefferies (2010) adopts Simpson’s (1993) model of transitivity. Depending on the type of process or state that lexical verbs appear to describe, the transitivity model allocates them into many groups. The key categories are as follows:

1. Material action process includes the most common verbs, which refer to something that is done or occurs. These actions can be either intentional (MAI, for Material Action Intentional), unintentional (MAS for Material Action supervention), or event (MAE, for Material Action Event)

2. Verbalization process characterizes any actions that involve the use of language such as 'say' and 'tell.'

3. Mental process represents verbs that mainly allude to what happens within human beings. They are divided into three sorts; the first is Mental Cognition (MC), such as thinking and understanding. The second type is Mental Reaction (MR), such as liking and hating. Mental Perception (MP) is the third subcategory, such as hearing and seeing

4. Relational process includes verbs, which show the static connections between a carrier and an attribute. These verbs include the copula (to be) and other 'Intensive' relations (RI), Possessive relations as indicated by verbs like have (RP), and 'Circumstantial' relations (RC), which include verbs of movement as well as the verb be (Jefferies, 2010).

Negating

Negating examines a literary process in which non-existent representations of the world are presented. Jefferies suggests that syntactic, semantic, or morphological procedures can all fulfill negating. Adding a negative particle to the verb phrase (such as are not, is not, have not, etc.) or using pronouns such as (nobody, no one, none, nothing, etc.) are examples of syntactic processes. Nouns, verbs, and adjectives that are fundamentally pejorative are all part of the semantic processes. Adjectives like scarce and absent, as well as nouns like lack, absence, and scarcity, as well as verbs like fail, reject, and omit. Undecided, anti-depressant, uncompromising, inactivity, disrespect, deactivate, etc., are examples of morphological processes that are generated by adding a prefix. (Jefferies, 2010)

Equating and Contrasting

The equating and contrasting tool is used to examine the structure of language and the effect created by parallel structures, copula structures, apposition, and oppositions. Jefferies (2010, presents a set of syntactic triggers for the construction of contrast as follows:
Negated opposition X, not Y; some X, no Y; plenty of X, a lack of Y, etc. Transitional opposition Turn X into Y; becomes Y; from X to Y, etc.
Comparative opposition More X than Y; less X than Y.
Replacing opposition X instead of Y; X rather than Y; X in preference to Y etc. Concessive opposition Despite X, Y; X, yet Y; X still, Y, etc.
Explicit opposition X by contrast with Y; X as opposed to Y, etc.

Parallelism He liked X. She liked Y; your house is X, mine is Y, etc.
Contrastive X, but Y.

As for the equivalence triggers, Jeffries indicates that they are fewer in numbers and narrow in range and that readers can add to them:
Intensive relational equivalence X is Y; X seems Y; X became Y; X appears Y; Z made X Y; Z thinks XY; Z cause X to be Y etc.
Appositional equivalence X, Y, (Z), etc.
Metaphorical equivalence X is Y; The X of Y; X is like Y etc. (Jeffries, 2010, pp.58-59).

Exemplifying and Enumerating
This usually entails enumerating an extensive list of a category’s members, as well as generic categories and their instances. In the same manner that opposites and equivalences are represented as textually constructed, these functions sometimes establish categories and categorize members. The structural techniques used to build up exemplification are numerous and diverse. Still, they frequently contain explicit mention of the fact that they are instances, such as utilizing verbs like 'include' or adverb introductions like 'such as.' There may be a solid rhetorical impact reminiscent of Biblical or lyrical parallelism in some circumstances if the items in the list are clausal and there is structural repetition. Assuming such linkages aids the text in establishing a different ideological framework (Jeffries 2010).

Hypothesizing
Modality is a linguistically accessible conceptual tool for analysis that alerts us to the encoding of the speaker/ writer’s viewpoint. Using the modality system, it is possible to present a fictitious reality. The modal system, according to Halliday (1994), belongs to the interpersonal metafunctions of language. In its textual conceptual sense, however, Jeffries (2016) believes that Modality is ideational. It can demonstrate the influence on the reader or listener in various ways (Jeffries, 2016). Jeffries adopts Simson’s (1993) model of Modality, according to which there are three types of Modality in terms of meaning:
1). Epistemic Modality: reflects the speaker’s doubt or certainty.
2). Deontic Modality: refers to the degree of obligation.
3). Boulomaic Modality: refers to the desirability of the speaker doing an action.

Research Procedures
The current study will employ the critical stylistic approach outlined above to uncover the underlying ideologies of women empowerment encoded in Mona Lisa Smile. The analysis of the film will focus on four extracts. The following details show how the researchers create a process to conduct the analysis and fulfill the study’s objectives:
1. Watching the movie several times and identifying the extracts in which certain ideologies about women empowerment are encoded.
2. Choosing certain utterances from the extracts that exploit a specific ideology of women empowerment and one or more of the critical stylistic tools.
3. Explaining the context of the extracts.
4. Deciphering the textual or conceptual meaning: this refers to how each extract uses language choices to convey a specific world-view regarding women empowerment; and
5. Inserting a table beneath each section of analysis related to the four extracts for the sake of clarification.

Data Analysis
This section is dedicated to analyzing the chosen data using Jeffries`s framework (2010), which has been discussed above in a previous section.

Extracts 1
President Joycelyn: Who knocks at the Door of Learning?
Joan: I am every woman.
President Joycelyn: What do you seek?
Joan: To awaken my spirit through hard work and dedicate my life to knowledge
President Joycelyn: Then you are welcome. All women who seek to follow you can enter here.
I now declare the academic year begun" (Newell, 2003, 0:03:36).

Contextualization
The extract above occurs at the outset of the film when all of the students congregate at Wellesley College`s front door to execute the academic year`s first rituals.

Analysis of Extract 1
In this extract, empowerment is embodied by Joan`s character. She tries to empower herself and other women through education. She also attempts to show the importance of education in their lives. And this is demonstrated by employing a set of tools in her utterances. As for the tool of Presenting Actions/Events/ States, it is realized in the utterance, "I am every woman." The relational verb "be" expresses a relationship of equivalence between one thing and another. Here, Joan describes herself as a representative of every woman who seeks empowerment through education. In addition, the material action verbs "awake" and "dedicate" in the utterances "To awaken my spirit" and "Dedicate My Life." represent the process and the women represent the doers. Here, Joan`s use of the stylistic tool Representing Actions/Events/States is rhetorically engaging. The verbs "awake" and "dedicate" assert how women`s spirit can be valued through education. The verbs give us an insight into Joan`s cultural background.

Another tool found easily and obviously in this extract is that of Equating. In the utterance, "I am every woman," two noun phrases, the subject pronoun "I" and the noun phrase "every woman" appear on either side of the intensive relational verb "am." By doing so, Joan equates herself with every woman. As if she is trying to say that she and every woman should stand at the door of learning to develop themselves as well as their societies.
In the case of the Exemplifying and Enumerating tool, Exemplifying is found in the utterance "to awaken my spirit through hard work and dedicate my life to knowledge" as a two-part example of the aims that students at Wellesley College are attempting to achieve. As for the Negation and Hypothesizing processes, they are not realized in the extract above. All the previous examples are summarized in table one.

Most importantly, women empowerment is shown in this extract strongly associated with the ideology of consolidation of education.

Table 1. Critical stylistics tools used in extract 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Utterances</th>
<th>Triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Presenting Actions/Events/States</td>
<td>&quot;To awaken my spirit.&quot;</td>
<td>Material Action Intentional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>&quot;To dedicate my life.&quot;</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>&quot;I am every women.&quot;</td>
<td>Relational Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Equating and Contrasting</td>
<td>&quot;I am every women.&quot;</td>
<td>Intensive Relational Equivalences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Exemplifying and Enumerating</td>
<td>&quot;To awaken my spirit through hard work and dedicate my life to knowledge.&quot;</td>
<td>Two-Part List</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract 2

Katherine: What will future scholars see when they study us? A portrait of women today? There you are, ladies. The perfect likeness of a Wellesley graduate, Magna cum laude, doing exactly what she was trained to do. Slide. A Rhodes Scholar. I wonder if she recites Chaucer while she presses her husband’s shirts. Slide. Now, you physics majors can calculate the mass and volume of every meatloaf you make! Slide! A girdle to set you free. What does that mean? What does it mean? What does it mean? I give up. You win, the smartest women in the country. I did not realize that, by demanding excellence, I would be challenged. What did it say? What did it say? ‘The roles you were born to fill. Is that right? The roles you were born to fill. It is my mistake. Class dismissed” (Newell, 2003, 1:09:27).

Contextualization

The context of this extract is in the class. Betty as the editor of the school paper and whose mother is the head of the alumni association, continually criticizes Katherine’s liberalism and incites the administration and alumni to rein in Katherine’s behavior. She writes an article in which she strictly assaults Katherine for promoting that women should pursue a profession rather than stay at home and be mothers as they used to be. As a result, Katherine presents this brutal, honest speech to mock the students of Wellesley and their
Analysis of Extract 2

This extract highlights one of the ideologies of women empowerment, which is related to the notion that women are driven mostly by family life. This is conveyed through Epistemic Modality, which is represented by "what will the future scholars see…?" The employment of "will" with the choice of the noun "the future scholars" denotes that the future scholars are unsatisfied with her student’s ideas and aims. She mocks the roles that society has set up for women. Another example of the Hypothesizing process is in the utterance "physics majors can calculate the mass and volume of every meatloaf you make" and through the epistemic model lexical verb in the utterance, "I wonder if she recites Chaucer while she presses her husband’s shirts." Again, Katherine presents her own view by creating a hypothetical reality. The model verb "can" indicates Epistemic Modality. Linguistically, she uncovers her ideology concerning empowerment that can be realized through education by satirizing the roles and duties that women have to do in their future.

In this extract, the tool Representing Actions/Events/States plays a crucial role in constructing the textual meaning through depictions of how referents interact with the world. Katherine uses the mental perception verb "see" in the utterance "What will the future scholars see" indicating that "the future scholars" are the sensor, "see" is the process and "the traditional roles of women" are the phenomena that Katherine keeps on rejecting.

As for Negation, it is found in the utterance "I did not realize" to reflect an alternative reality. Katherine believes that her journey of making a radical change in the student’s wants, desires, and even their way of thinking would be welcomed by the students themselves and the college committee. On the contrary, her attempts are challenged and rejected.

Again, the stereotypical image of women which is represented obviously in Wellesley’s students is criticized by Katherine. Through language, Katherine exemplifies the state of Wellesley’s girls. Katherine presents a four-part list of things that women can do. Although these things are not different, they all reflect a picture of the traditional role women used to do.

The extract also makes use of the tool Contrasting. By using the utterances, "I give up" and "You win", Katherine exploits the contracting process to show that the view in Wellesley College and society at that time goes against her ideas of independence. All these points are mentioned in table two.

| Table 2. Critical stylistic tools used in extract 2 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| No. | Tools | Utterances | Triggers | Table 2. Critical stylistic tools used in extract 2 |
|----|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Hypothesizing | "What will the future scholars see." | Epistemic Modality |
| | = | "Physics majors can calculate the mass." | Epistemic Modality |
| | = | "I wonder if she recites Chaucer while she presses." | Epistemic Lexical Verb |
| 2. | Representing Actions/Events/States | "What will the future scholars see." | Mental Verb |
| 3. | Negation | "I did not realize." | Syntactical Negation |
| 4. | Exemplifying and Enumerating | "she recites Chaucer while she presses her husband’s shirts. Slide Now, you physics majors can calculate the mass and volume."
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|

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of every meatloaf you make! Slide! A girdle to set you free."

5.   Equating and Contrasting
      "I give up, you win."
      Contrasting:

**Extract 3**

Betty’s mother: Honey, what are you doing here?
Betty: I’m staying the night.
Betty’s mother: Spencer won’t mind?
Betty: Spencer won’t notice. He’s in New York again, working.
Betty’s mother: He’s working hard for both of you.
Betty: Don’t lie for him, Mother. He does it so well for himself.
Betty’s mother: You’re going to turn around, go home, fix your face and wait for your husband. This is the bargain you made, Elizabeth, We all did.
Betty: So you’re not going to let me stay in my own house?
Betty’s mother: Spencer’s house is your house now. Believe me, it’s for your own good"

**Contextualization**

The above extract takes place in Betty's mother’s house. Betty finds herself alone while her husband goes to New York. Therefore, she decides to spend the night at her mother’s house. However, her mother encourages her to return to her house suggesting that there is no better place for a woman than her house.

**Analysis of Extract 3**

The above extract encompasses the stylistic tools of Negation, Hypothesizing, Contrasting, Presenting Action/Events/States, and finally Exemplifying and Enumerating. By mixing the Negation process with the Hypothesizing process, Betty’s mother reveals her ideology which supports the stereotypical women. She wants her daughter to stay at her home even if her husband is absent waiting for his return. The epistemic modality 'won’t' in the utterance "Spencer won’t mind" shows the certainty of Betty’s mother that Spencer will mind Betty’s action of sleeping in her mother’s house. Simply, Betty’s mother is influenced by the stereotypical image of women. The ideologically loaded epistemic modality "Spencer won’t mind" reflects the effect that Betty’s mother considers the empowerment of women only in her house with her husband. On the contrary, Betty’s utterance"Spencer won't notice" reflects her sureness that Spencer won’t notice her absence. By stating this, Betty is about to disengage from the conventional route that most girls comport in their lives. Besides, Negation is also found in Betty’s utterances "don’t lie" and" you're not going to let me stay". Through Negation, Betty declares that she no longer believes in her mother's ideas.

Another tool of critical stylistics, namely Equating and Contrasting, reveals the notion under discussion via intentional relational equivalence. In her utterance "Spencer’s house is your house," Betty’s mother equates Spencer’s house to Betty’s house. Here, Betty’s mother highlights the empowerment of women in her house. The same two utterances uttered by Betty and her mother respectively "spencer won’t notice" and" Spencer won’t mind" reflect the contracting
ideologies of the two. Betty starts rejecting the stereotypical image of women while her mother is still very attached to her traditional idea.

In the case of Exemplifying and Enumerating tool, Enumerating is found throughout the extract as a four-part list in the utterance of Betty’s mother "to turn around, go home... fix your face and wait for your husband". These four parts are related to the role that women used to do. Betty’s mother suggests that what Betty should do is to stay at her husband’s house and to wait for her husband’s return. This list which consists of four parts is fully a comprehensive list indicating the role of women.

As for Representing Actions/Events/States, the material action verb "stay" is utilized in Betty’s utterance, "I`m staying the night," indicating her intention to change her state. She leaves her house and moves to her mother’s house. Another material action verb is used, but this time in the utterance of Betty’s mother "we all did." By stating this, Betty’s mother conveys her ideology concerning women and their empowerment. She considers the empowerment of women is just within their home, and it is their responsibility to achieve this power by performing their duties perfectly. All the above points are summarized in table three.

Table 3. Critical stylistic tools used in extract 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Utterances</th>
<th>Triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Negation</td>
<td>&quot;Spencer won't mind.&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Spencer won't notice.&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Don't lie&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;you're not going to let me stay.&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Hypothesizing</td>
<td>&quot;'Spencer won't mind.&quot;</td>
<td>Epistemic Modality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Spencer won't notice.&quot;</td>
<td>Epistemic Modality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relational Equivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Spencer won't mind&quot; &quot;Spencer won’t notice.&quot;</td>
<td>Contrasting : Parallel Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Exemplifying and Enumerating.</td>
<td>&quot;To turn around, go home... fix your face and wait for your husband.&quot;</td>
<td>Enumerating : Four-Part List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Representing Actions / Events /States.</td>
<td>&quot;I'm staying the night.&quot;</td>
<td>Material Action Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We all did.&quot;</td>
<td>Material Action Process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract 4

Joan: It was my choice not to go. He would have supported it.
Katherine: But you do not have to choose.
Joan: No, I have to. I want a home, a family. It is not something I’ll sacrifice.
Katherine: No one is asking you to sacrifice that, Joan. I just want you to understand that you can do both.
Joan: Think I’ll wake up one day and regret not being a lawyer?
Katherine: Yes, I’m afraid that you will.
Joan: Not as much as I’d regret not having a family. Not being there to raise them. I know exactly what I’m doing, and it doesn’t make me any less smart. This must seem terrible to you" (Newell, 2003, 1:31:31).

Contextualization

In the extract above, Katherine goes to Joan’s house and tells her that she has been accepted to law school and that it is time to make her dream a reality. In return, Joan replies that she is no longer eager to the mentioned subject. Instead, she is powerfully cheerful about her choice concerning marriage. Despite that, Katherine keeps on trying to convince Joan to rethink profoundly and not to stop pursuing her goal, suggesting that Joan can do both: learning and being a wife. However, Joan rejects Katherine’s suggestion, stating that she will never regret her decision.

Analysis of Extract 4

The above extract uses a set of critical stylistic tools to carry the conceptual meaning of Katherine’s and Joan’s views. Negation is one of these tools, which is realized grammatically and lexically. The former comes in the form of "not" while the latter includes whole words like "no one." Ideologically, the use of Negation is an effective way employed by Katherine to reveal her beliefs concerning women empowerment. Being a woman and a teacher, Katherine strongly encourages education. Firstly, through Negation, she suggests in her utterance, "you do not have to choose" that women do not have to choose between education and being wives. By stating that "no one is asking you to sacrifice," Katherine argues that her student, Joan, does not have to dispose of her dream of finishing her study and becoming a successful lawyer for the sake of having a family. Instead, she can do both being a wife and a mother and pursue her career as well. Concerning the Hypothesizing Process, it is observed abundantly in the extract to portray the individual’s views towards the notion discussed. It is found in the utterance, "you do not have to choose" through the auxiliary verb "do not have to" which reflects the Deontic Modality suggesting the lack of obligation or duty in acting. Supporting her ideology, Katherine means that Joan is not obliged to choose between marriage and education. Another utterance implying Modality is that "you can do both," which is uttered by Kathrine in an attempt to instill her content of thinking in her student. At this point, Katherine is trying to convey her view concerning the importance of education. Through Modality, Katherine introduces her ideology, hoping to construct a potential view that Joan may adopt or be influenced by. Again, in the utterance, "I`m afraid that you will," Hypothesizing Process is utilized. The model auxiliary "will" is used to convey Epistemic Modality – medium certainty. Katherine expresses her certainty that Joan will regret her decision. Besides to Negation and Modality, the Contrasting Process plays a crucial role in revealing Katherine’s ideas. Contrasting is found through the conjunction "but" when Katherine states, "but you do not have to choose." By setting the contrast with the Deontic Modality, Katherine contradicts Joan’s decision.

For the tool Representing Actions/Events/States, both the mental and the material processes operate together to construct the notion being analyzed. The mental process is realized by the verb "understand" while the material process is realized by the verb "do." Both are found in Kathrine’s utterance "I just want you to understand you can do both"
On the contrary, Joan incorporates the use of Negation, Hypothesizing, Exemplifying and Enumerating, Equating, and Representing Actions/Events/States to reveal her ideology of stereotypically family life in empowering women. Starting with the Negation process, it is shown in the utterance, "It was my choice not to go." By declaring this, Joan shows her belief that what she wants most is to be a wife after graduation rather than anything else. Again, Negation is employed in the utterance, "It is not something I’ll sacrifice" to present another aspect of reality. Here, Negation expresses the idea that marital life is not something to be sacrificed as much as it is possible with professional life. Another example of Negation is used in the utterance, "not as much as I'd regret not having a family," which is mainly used to support Joan’s rejection of attending law school. As for Joan, the knowledge that she aims to achieve is getting a husband. She does not care about pursuing any professions. In her utterance, "it doesn’t make me any less smart," Joan emphasizes through Negation that she would not regret her decision of not going to law school and would not affect her smartness.

Moreover, the Hypothesizing process appears in the utterance "not as much as I’d regret" through the Epistemic Modality "would." Another form of Modality is realized using the lexical verb "regret", indicating Boulomaic Modality. By incorporating the Negation Process with two forms of Modality, Joan expresses her ideology that she is sure about never regretting her desire and choice of being a wife.

As for Exemplifying and Enumerating, it is realized by two items separated by a comma in Joan’s utterance, "I want a home, a family." By stating this, she summarizes her wants by these two items.

Furthermore, Joan keeps revealing her ideologies concerning marital life and its importance in empowering women. The stylistic tool of Equating is utilized in Joan’s utterance, "I'd regret not having a family. Not being there to raise them." The verb "regret" is modified by the non-finite verb phrase "not having a family" and its parallel structure "not being there." Linguistically, Joan’s choices uncover her ideas about the subject mentioned above. Similarly, the verbs used in Joan’s speech reflect her beliefs. In her utterances, "I want a home, a family" and "I know exactly." the mental verbs "want" and "know" are evident for Joan’s aims and beliefs.

The two ideologies related to women empowerment, which are revealed through this extract, are that of family life belonging to Joan and that of education and its importance, which belongs to Katherine. The tools mentioned above are shown in table four below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Utterances</th>
<th>Triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Negation.</td>
<td>&quot;you do not have to choose.&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;No one is asking you to sacrifice.&quot;</td>
<td>Lexical Negation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;It was my choice not to go.&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

After analyzing the extracts taken from the *Mona Lisa Smile* movie, it is clearly observed that critical stylistic tools are implemented in the building of the notion of women empowerment to uncover the ideologies encoded in the language of the characters. In the 1950s, domesticity was the target of most women. Women’s ambitions were limited just to having a husband and a house. In addition, even when they got married, they devoted themselves to the duties of the house and raising the kids. Moreover, they were characterized as house-pride women who prioritized their husband’s work over their own. Katherine, on the contrary, wanted her students to be open-minded and realize the fact that they had the freedom to live their life whatever they wished. She motivated her students to think in the right way, continue their studies, occupy higher positions, and enhance their financial prospects, rather than complying with the social norms about women. However, language is not only used for communication but also as an essential means of revealing different ideologies hidden within texts. Based on data analysis, it is evident that women empowerment is conveyed through the use of critical stylistic tools. All the previously selected tools are noticed in the analysis but at different frequencies. The highest frequency is for Negating and Hypothesizing since there are contrasting ideologies. Other tools are nearly used with the same frequency. In conclusion, the notion of women empowerment is represented through most of the characters in the movie but with different ideologies.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool Description</th>
<th>Phrase Example</th>
<th>Stylistic Tool</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is not something I'll sacrifice.&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I'd regret not having a family.&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It doesn't make me any less smart.&quot;</td>
<td>Syntactic Negation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You do not have to choose.&quot;</td>
<td>Deontic Modality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You can do both.&quot;</td>
<td>Epistemic Modal Verb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I'm afraid that you will.&quot;</td>
<td>Epistemic Modality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Not as much as I'd regret.&quot;</td>
<td>Epistemic + Boulomaic Modality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;But you do not have to choose.&quot;</td>
<td>Contrastive &quot;but&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I'd regret not having a family. Not being there to raise them.&quot;</td>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I want a home, a family.&quot;</td>
<td>Two-Part List (enumerating)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I want a home, a family.&quot;</td>
<td>Mental Verb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I know exactly.&quot;</td>
<td>Mental Verb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I just want you to understand you can do both.&quot;</td>
<td>Mental + Material Verbs</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
A Critical Stylistic Study of the Notion of Women Empowerment

Omar & Abbas

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References


Investigating the Relationship between Emotional Well-being and Grit as Predictors of Saudi EFL Female Students' Foreign Language Achievement

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Abstract
Research into language learning psychology has shown that personality and psychological traits have influenced learners' academic outcomes. Nevertheless, the literature contains very little research into the positive psychology of language learners and positive constructs such as grit and well-being. Consequently, this study aimed to examine how the psychological factors of well-being and grit impact the academic achievement of foreign language Saudi female learners concerning their age. Thus, this study attempted to determine the possible statistical relationships between grit, emotional well-being, and foreign language achievement for Saudi female EFL learners. To answer this central research question, the data were obtained via an online survey of 84 Saudi EFL female college-level students. Pearson correlational tests and hierarchical regression tests were used for statistical analyses. The findings revealed that: (1) grit had a positive and significant correlation with well-being levels; 2) grit (perseverance of effort-POE) had a significant and positive relationship with well-being; (3) well-being and grit were significant predictors of participants' academic achievement, and (4) older EFL learners had higher grit levels than their younger peers. The results imply that understanding the positive psychology of language learners contributes to helping them to achieve academic success. Based on these findings, several pedagogical implications were suggested.

Keywords: emotional well-being, foreign language achievement, grit, positive psychology, Saudi EFL female learners

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Introduction

The psychology of language learners is a vital area of research in the Second language Acquisition (SLA) field. In the classroom, learners usually experience both negative and positive emotional states (Horwitz, 2017). Learners' emotions, both positive and negative, have been widely studied across different language learning contexts. There have been in-depth investigations into the impact of language learners' negative emotions, for example, stressors and speaking anxiety, on their language performance (e.g., Bagalay, Bayan, Caliboso, & Batang, 2021; Santos, Cunanan, & Mandap, 2021). Conversely, positive emotions have been argued to enhance language learning and promote learner engagement in various learning tasks (Liu & Wang, 2021; MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2019).

Positive Psychology (PP) is "the scientific study of what goes right in life" (Peterson, 2006, p. 4). PP includes certain positive emotions, including well-being, hope, grit, and perseverance, which are vital in language learning (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Seligman and Csikszentimihalyi (2014) stated that the main goals of PP are positive experiences, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. The individual traits of learners and positive emotions seem to be essential factors that influence academic performance in foreign languages (Gabryś-Barker & Galajda, 2014). Unfortunately, few recent studies have focused on the positive psychology of learners, including optimism, happiness, well-being, hope, empathy, and grit (e.g., Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Hariri, 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2019). However, these positive emotions, grit, and well-being are still not prominent concerns (MacIntyre et al., 2019).

The definition of grit is "trait-level perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087). It also "encompasses one's ability to maintain interests, exert effort, and persist at tasks over long periods" (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1087). It has been proved that grit could positively develop learners' academic performance and could help learners to "make positive attributions" and have "a more optimistic growth mindset" (Wei, Gao, & Wang, 2019, p. 2). Grit, therefore, is an important psychological factor requiring further investigation in terms of language learners.

Well-being Theory provides one of the complete models of well-being in context (Seligman, 2011), aiming to flourish individuals' lives and increase their engagement and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011, p. 12). Well-being theory has primarily been investigated within the language teaching field (e.g., Cherkowski & Walker, 2018; Weiland, 2021), more so than in language learning. An unexamined gap the current study attempts to fill is whether language learners who endorse different levels of well-being might differ in their grit levels.

As a result of several research gaps in the existing literature, the current empirical study, therefore, is warranted. First, empirical studies that have examined the relationship between grit and well-being remain scarce, which are both vital for successful foreign language learning, notably learning achievement and performance. Second, few studies have focused on positive psychology as a theoretical framework to appreciate the positive influence of emotions in upholding the emotional stability of learners. Third, several studies have been carried out across a broad range of EFL learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., Aparicio, Bacao, & Oliveira, 2017; Teimouri, Plonsky, & Tabandeh, 2020; Wei et al., 2019). However, few studies...
have focused on Arab learners of English, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study investigates the effects of grit and emotional well-being on Saudi EFL undergraduate learners' academic achievement.

Foreign language learners' performance and achievement have been argued to be influenced by their well-being and positive psychology. Thus, there should be direct attention to language learners' psychological health. Understanding language learning psychology could also help learners overcome their negative emotions and thus generate their positive emotions in classroom settings. Although a few studies have examined certain psychological constructs of EFL learners, no studies have been conducted on the relationship between grit and emotional well-being and their interplay effect on language academic achievement among EFL Saudi female undergraduate students. Therefore, this study is the first in this area and could contribute to the current literature on language learning psychology.

The main research objective of the present study was to highlight the importance of positive emotions, focusing mainly on the emotions of grit and well-being for foreign language academic success and achievement for EFL Saudi learners. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between grit and emotional well-being, considering their impact on EFL Saudi female undergraduate learners' academic language achievement.

This study aims to answer the following questions:
1) What is the relationship between grit and emotional well-being among EFL Saudi female undergraduate learners?
2) What is the relationship between grit and emotional well-being as predictors of the academic achievement of EFL Saudi female learners?
3) What is the relationship between grit, emotional well-being, and EFL Saudi female learners' age?

This paper is divided into five main sections. The first section gives a review of the current literature in the field. A description of the method, the participants, the instruments, and the data analysis procedures is provided in the second section. The third section presents the main results. The fourth section discusses the main findings and the limitations of this study. Finally, the fifth section presents the main conclusions drawn from this study and suggests several pedagogical implications.

**Literature Review**

Positive Psychology is a recent field of study concerned with individuals' well-being (Khajavy et al., 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2019). Seligman and Csikszentimihalyi (2014) are considered pioneers in this field and conducted several empirical studies on how well-being can provide better conditions for individuals in their personal and professional lives. MacIntyre et al. (2019) stated that positive psychology consists of three research areas:
- the impact of positive emotional attitudes on behaviors;
- characteristics of individuals who might have a good life; and
- types of activities that institutions use to increase opportunities for individuals to develop their well-being
Well-being

Well-being is the person's subjective experience of good health, positive emotions, prosperity, and happiness (Khajavy et al., 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2019). It positively impacts the lives of individuals through life satisfaction and their ability to reduce and manage stress. Well-being is classified into social and emotional well-being (i.e., being able to handle stress and deal with stressors) (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Across the world, language learners "engage with languages for reasons related to increased well-being" (MacIntyre et al., 2019, p. 263). Therefore, well-being is an important psychological factor when studying language learning.

Based on the Well-being Theory, Seligman (2011) proposed the Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA) framework. In this framework, positive emotions include psychological states such as pleasure and comfort. The second construct, engagement, means having a flow state and being absorbed in activities. Relationships involve positive relationships that "give meaning and purpose to life" (Seligman, 2011, p. 17). The term meaning in this framework refers to having a clear purpose in one's life. The term accomplishment refers to achieving goals and feeling competent (Seligman, 2011). Therefore, well-being is crucial in how one flourishes (Seligman, 2011). Pikhart and Klimova (2020) explored the relationship between language learning and well-being among 105 EFL Czech learners. The authors stated that foreign language learning could positively influence well-being, especially among older EFL learners. According to the participants, learning another language expanded their social networks and positively affected their mental health.

Grit

Grit refers to as a higher-order construct (Duckworth et al., 2007). It consists of two primary components: Consistency of Interest (COI) and Perseverance of Effort (POE). The former refers to working hard and maintaining effort even in the face of challenges; the latter refers to maintaining interest even when faced with setbacks and failure (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth et al. (2007) proposed a grit scale consisting of a two-correlated grit factor with twelve items. Subsequently, the two factors were combined to form one grit score for empirical analysis.

Some empirical studies have revealed that grit might have a positive relationship with academic outcomes, achievements, self-efficacy, motivation, motivation, engagement, and the willingness to communicate (Akos & Kretchmar, 2017; Aparicio et al., 2017; Lee, 2020; Liu & Wang, 2021; Piña-Watson, López, Ojeda, & Rodriguez, 2015; Usher, Li, Butz, & Rojas, 2018; Teimouri et al., 2020). Wei et al. (2019) focused on grit and foreign language performance amongst 832 middle school students and found that grit positively impacts foreign language performance. The researchers argued that grit has a crucial role in enhancing students' language performance. However, participants' age had no relationship with the grit levels, attributed to the possible homogeneity of the participants (Wei et al., 2019).

Liu and Wang (2021) considered the impact of foreign language enjoyment and anxiety as the primary mediators of grit and Foreign Language Performance (FLP). They found enjoyment was a positive mediator, whereas anxiety was a negative mediator of the correlations between grit and language performance. Based on this evidence, the authors speculated that:
Gritty individuals, when faced with challenges and adversity, tend to maintain motivation and focus more on their long-term goals rather than on their negative emotions. The achievement resulting from motivation and grit will, in turn, lead them to experience more enjoyment in the pursuit of their long-term goals. (p. 7)

Moreover, Liu and Wang suggested that foreign language teachers should foster "students' grit levels for the reason that increased grit levels may improve FL instruction and positive emotional experience and also have the potential effect of alleviating negative emotions" (p. 8).

Several researchers have considered the effect of grit on specific psychological factors. For example, Teimouri et al. (2020) explored the connection between grit and specific emotional and language outcomes. The researchers concluded that grit could positively be linked to enjoyment, attention, and achievement. However, grit was negatively correlated with language anxiety. Feng and Papi (2020) found that the grit factor of POE was related to second language motivational intensity. Lee (2020) also found that grit influenced 647 Korean EFL learners' willingness to communicate and enjoyment in the classroom.

The studies mentioned above suggest that positive psychology constructs, such as well-being and grit, have an essential role in improving language learning and boosting language learners' linguistic knowledge and performance. However, further studies are required (Dewaele, Chen, Padilla, & Lake, 2019).

Methods
Since this study attempts to understand the interrelationship between and the effect of grit and emotional well-being on EFL Saudi female learners' academic language achievement, a quantitative research design seems to suit the purpose well. This methodological research design is one of the most practical ways to explore the statistical connections between the variables. It also examines the topic at a general level of analysis, which might allow for generalizations of the findings to the broader population by focusing on large samples (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Dörnyei, 2007). An online survey was used to collect the quantitative data. According to Dörnyei (2007, p. 170), this instrument could allow "to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short time."

Participants
The study sample comprised 84 EFL Saudi female undergraduate students studying in the English department at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. The online survey was posted to the participants from November 2021 to January 2022. Recruitment was based on a snowball sampling method, as this is one of the non-probability sampling forms (Rooney & Ness Evans, 2018). The participants were asked to share the link to the online survey via email with their peers who were college-level EFL students. The link to the survey was also posted on the announcement board on the blackboard. The EFL Saudi female participants’ ages ranged from 19 to 28 years old (M = 21.35, SD = 1.71). The EFL Saudi female participants’ first language was Arabic, and they were majoring in English as a foreign language. Grading Point Average (GPA) grades for the participants had a mean score of 4.36, SD = .51. The minimum GPA score was three, and the maximum was five.
Research Instruments

The primary method of data collection was an online survey consisting of: (1) The EFL Saudi female students' age; (2) The EFL Saudi female students' GPA grades at their last academic level (their academic achievement); (3) the grit scale; and (4) well-being scale. A detailed description of the major scales is provided below.

English Language Achievement

The student's final grades at the end of the semester were obtained to assess their EFL achievement. In addition, they were asked about their academic GPA in the last semester. GPA refers to a 5-point grading score indicating the average score of the students on their courses. The GPA grading system in most Saudi universities has the following grading levels: 4.76–5 (exceptional), 4.51–4.75 (excellent), 4.01–4.50 (superior), 3.51–4 (very good), 3.01–3.50 (above average), 2.51–3 (good), 2.01–2.50 (high pass), 1.01–2 (pass), and 0–1 (fail).

Grit

The grit scale (Grit) was developed by Duckworth et al. (2007) and included 12 items. The first six measure POE (perseverance of effort) (e.g., "setbacks do not discourage me"), and the other six measure COI (consistency of interest) (e.g., "new ideas and projects sometimes distract me from the previous one"). The six COI items were reverse coded for larger values to show a higher COI (see Table one).

Table 1. Reliability Estimates and mean scores of the variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No of items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total grit</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.735</td>
<td>3.078</td>
<td>.616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.735</td>
<td>3.750</td>
<td>.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COI</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.710</td>
<td>2.406</td>
<td>.821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional well-being</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>3.682</td>
<td>.808</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. COI = consistency of interest, POE = perseverance of effort.

Emotional Well-being

PERMA-Profiler scale was adapted from Butler and Kern's (2016) model. This scale consisted of 23 items based on nine factors: 1) positive emotions (3 items; e.g., "In general, how often do you feel positive?"); 2) engagement (3 items; e.g., "In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?"); 3) relationships (3 items; e.g., "To what extent do you feel loved?"); 4) meaning (3 items; e.g., "To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?"); 5) accomplishment (3 items; e.g., "How much of the time do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your goals?"); 6) negative emotions (3 items; e.g., "In general, how often do you feel anxious?"); 7) physical health (3 items; e.g., "In general, how would you say your health is?"); 8) happiness (1 item; e.g., "Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?"); and 9) loneliness (1 item; e.g., "How lonely do you feel in your daily life?"). The PERMA profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016) was used to measure the five well-being dimensions. The participants responded on a five-point Likert scale 0 = (never/very bad) to 5 = (always/very good). A total score was calculated by averaging the standardized scores for the first five factors:
positive feelings, engagement, relations, meaning, and accomplishment (see Table one). The other factors were measured as individual constructs (i.e., negative emotions, happiness, and loneliness). The composite variable of all factors parallels the score of the perception of well-being (Butler & Kern, 2016).

**Research Procedures**

All survey items were presented in English with their equivalent translation in Arabic to ensure the scales’ validity and that the EFL Saudi female participants understood the meaning of all statements. The items were translated into Arabic by a proficient Arabic–English translator and the author. The validity of the survey was also evaluated by two field experts who concurred that it was a valid measure. The survey took about 10 to 12 minutes to complete.

The research design and questionnaire gained ethical approval. The first page of the online survey was Informed Consent. Thus, each participant was informed of what the study was about and reassured of the confidentiality of their responses. No participant was forced or directly encouraged to participate in the survey, and confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. The participants were informed that their information would only be used in beneficial ways. The values of Cronbach's alpha for all scales were good, denoting a solid level of reliability (see Table one).

**Data Analysis**

To explore data distribution normality, one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were utilised, which indicated that the values for the PERMA, POE, COI, and Grit were normally distributed (PERMA profiler = .96, p = .08; POE = .98, p = .06; COI = .98, p = .06; and Grit = .98, p = .15). Parametric statistical tests were then used to analyse the data. For example, Pearson correlations were used to explore the statistical relationships between grit, emotional well-being, academic achievement, and age. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS, version 21) was used in this study.

**Results**

**The Statistical Relationship between Emotional Well-being and Grit among EFL Learners**

Figure one, below, shows that grit is significantly and positively correlated with emotional well-being ($r = .439$, $p < .0001$). These results showed that the EFL learners who self-reported being gritty reported high levels of emotional well-being. The correlation analyses also showed a statistically significant relationship between emotional well-being and POE ($r = .610$, $p < .0001$) (see Table three). However, COI did not significantly correlate with well-being. Pearson correlational analysis showed a significant and positive correlation between POE and the grit score ($r = .761$, $p < .000$), and between COI and grit score ($r = .803$, $p < .0001$).
The findings of the Pearson correlational analyses indicated that the two constructs of the PERMA model (negative emotion and physical health) were significantly correlated with grit scores. Specifically, negative emotions were negatively and significantly correlated with grit score \( (r = - .254, p < .05) \). Physical health had a positive and significant correlation with grit score \( (r = .238, p = .02) \). Further correlational analyses showed a significant and negative relationship between negative emotions and POE \( (r = -.238, p = .02) \).

Figure two shows the mean scores among participants of the constructs of the PERMA-Profiler. The participants reported the highest scores in the dimensions of engagement \( (M = 3.85, SD = .783) \) and accomplishment \( (M = 3.79, SD = .769) \). Conversely, the positive emotion dimension received the lowest mean score among the five dimensions \( (M = 3.48, SD = .954) \). The statistical results will be presented below regarding the possible impact of grit and well-being as predictors of EFL Saudi female students' language achievement.

**Grit and Emotional-Being as Predictors of the Participants' EFL Achievement**

Simple linear regression was calculated to determine the effect of grit and well-being as predictors of EFL achievement. A significant regression equation was discovered \( (F (3, 84) = 62.04, p < .001) \). The predictor model accounted for approximately 70% of the EFL achievement.
dimension. Age and academic grading scores were slightly significant (p < .01). The second model included the effects of grit and well-being scores on EFL Saudi female students' achievement. The results revealed significant effects of both constructs, β = .244 and .414, respectively, all ps < .001 (see Table two). This predictor model accounted for 60.1% of the variance in the EFL achievement.

Table 2. Hierarchical regression Model for predicting EFL achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. E</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.242**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic level</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.219*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.571</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic level</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.122*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.244***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grit</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.414***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: B = Unstandardized Coefficients; β = Beta (standardised regression coefficient); (*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001).

Table two, above, shows that the grit score significantly predicted EFL achievement (B = .71). Similarly, the other independent variable, well-being, significantly and positively predicted EFL achievement (B = 0.51).

The Relationship between Emotional Well-being, Grit, and Age

Interestingly, Table three shows that EFL learners’ age was significantly and positively related to grit levels (r = .374, p < .001), of the POE (r = .238, p < .01), and of the COI (r = .344, p < .001). These results indicate that older EFL learners appear to have higher levels of grit than younger learners. However, there was no significant link between age and emotional well-being.

Table 3. *Pearson correlational analysis between grit, POE, COI, age, and well-being*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Grit</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.439**</td>
<td>.761**</td>
<td>.803**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emotional well-being</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.439**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.610**</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. POE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.761**</td>
<td>.610**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.224*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. COI</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.803**</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.224*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Age</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.374**</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.238*</td>
<td>.344**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Overall, the results indicated a significant positive relationship between the two psychological constructs (i.e., grit and emotional well-being) among the EFL Saudi female
investigating the relationship between emotional well-being and grit

participants. More specifically, emotional well-being was significantly and positively related to POE’s grit factor. Moreover, the results indicated a significant impact of grit and emotional well-being as predictors of the EFL Saudi female students participating in this study. The statistical analysis, furthermore, showed a significant impact of the EFL Saudi female participants' age on their levels of grit and both factors of COI and POE. In other words, older EFL Saudi female students seemed to be gritters, to maintain efforts and interests even when facing challenges and failure than younger female participants. The findings of this study are discussed below.

Discussion

To deepen our knowledge of the psychological traits of EFL learners, exploring the positive psychology of EFL learners is necessary (Khajavy et al., 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2019). Therefore, the present study sought to assess the possible relationships between well-being and grit for EFL female college-level learners in Saudi Arabia. By answering the first research question, the finding suggested significant and positive associations between the two positive psychological variables of grit and emotional well-being. This finding concurs with previous research into the role of grit in other positive factors such as motivation (Feng & Papi, 2020; Teimouri et al., 2020), willingness to communicate (Lee, 2020), and foreign language enjoyment (Liu & Wang, 2021). However, no studies have focused on the association between these two positive psychological constructs (i.e., grit and emotional well-being). Therefore, this study adds to the previous evidence on the significance of investigating the influence of grit and illuminating the interplay of different positive factors on the language achievement of learners.

More detailed analyses of the quantitative data indicated that well-being was positively and significantly linked to the grit construct of POE but not COI. The results indicate that learners who sustain efforts even when faced with challenges may have higher levels of well-being and good physical health. However, the ability of learners to maintain interest over time appears unrelated to their well-being. This contradiction could be because maintaining interest over time might be influenced by other personal or cognitive factors, including individual language learning strategies, cognitive styles, knowledge, and confidence, or external factors such as classroom environments (Dewaele et al., 2019).

By answering the second research question on the possible effect of grit and well-being as predictors of EFL Saudi female learners' academic language achievement, the findings indicated both psychological constructs' significant and positive effect on the learners' academic achievement. Crucially, these findings imply that learners with grit have high levels of emotional well-being and may be able to use more language learning strategies and better manage their time (Lee, 2020). These abilities may help learners make notable progress in their language learning process (Aparicio et al., 2017). This study, thus, contributes to the previous literature by highlighting the importance of well-being as a psychological factor in boosting the academic achievement of EFL learners. These findings reveal the importance of practicing effective strategies for emotional well-being management and coping with setbacks and failures during language learning.

The third research question explored the possible relationship between grit, emotional well-being, and EFL Saudi female learners' age. The findings indicated that learners' age
significantly impacted their levels of grit and the two grit constructs: POE and COI. This finding reveals that older learners display a higher level of grit than their younger peers. Thus, levels of grit and the perseverance of efforts or maintenance of interest over time might increase by age; in other words, grit is more likely to be age sensitive. However, this finding does not concur with some previous studies that did not find any significant impact of age on grit levels (Wei et al., 2019). This finding may be attributed to the participants’ diverse academic grades at different academic levels and ages in the present study. The impact of age on grit suggests that older learners may be more experienced in learning from their setbacks and failures than younger learners who might perceive language learning as a more significant challenge.

As with any research, some areas can be improved. Firstly, the findings are based on a cross-sectional analysis, which only provides statistical correlations between the independent variables (age, well-being, and grit) and a dependent variable (academic achievement). Consequently, this study cannot provide statistical evidence for the variables’ causal relationships. Secondly, the sample only included a small group of participants with one cultural and linguistic background (i.e., Arabic). Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to other linguistic contexts or EFL learners from different cultural backgrounds. Moreover, this study focused on only two individual traits, well-being, and grit, so other individual internal factors may exist that determine academic performance. Finally, the current findings do not reveal how grit and well-being relate to other variables that predict academic achievements, such as motivation (Feng & Papi, 2020) and a willingness to communicate (Lee, 2020).

**Pedagogical Implications**

There are several suggested pedagogical implications based on this study. First, foreign language instructors should be aware of the psychological factors of well-being and personality traits such as grit. Therefore, secondly, they should attempt to enhance their students' emotional well-being by promoting the importance of grit to maintain student efforts during their language learning. Third, language teachers should focus more on less gritty students and try to adopt teaching styles or strategies to strengthen their personality traits positively. Fourth, language teachers should provide students with feedback so that the learner can freely express their emotions or concerns about their language learning progress and academic achievement. Moreover, to promote grit, language teachers should value the effort learners put in to succeed.

Fifth, language learners should examine their personality traits and explore how their efforts can be sustained and how they can maintain a personal interest in the language classroom. Learners could also attend short courses on developing personality traits and learn how to overcome negative emotions. In addition, it would be helpful for language learners to adopt various cognitive, psychological, and practical strategies that can enhance and develop their well-being management. Developing well-being management can develop their skills and overcome negative feelings likely to emerge from setbacks and failures experienced during language learning. Finally, language learners with low levels of grit should understand that people develop and change over time by learning from their setbacks and failures.
Conclusion

This empirical study investigated the possible link between two critical psychological constructs – grit and emotional well-being – and their possible impact on EFL Saudi female college-level students' academic language achievement, considering their age. The findings of this study suggest that the two positive constructs of well-being and grit appear to influence foreign language learners' academic language achievement. In particular, the findings suggest that older learners might exhibit higher levels of grit than young learners, contributing to their increased study efforts. The findings of this study support the idea that positive psychology is vital for language learners and could develop their language learning progress. This study suggests that EFL learners with high levels of well-being and grit may be more persistent in overcoming learning difficulties and eventually succeed in language learning.

Recommendations

Future research should test the relationship between these variables and assess their effect on achievement through well-being or grit. Additional longitudinal research is required to examine the possible effects of grit on academic achievement over a long time, considering the changes in grit levels among different learner age groups. Other empirical studies could focus on the influence of classroom interventions on the students' grit levels. Qualitative research could also contribute to understanding the effects of other personal or linguistic factors that may relate to language learning success or performance.

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References


Exploring Undergraduate Students' Perspectives toward Computer-aided Translation Tools and Machine Translation: A Case Study of Students of the English Department

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Abstract
Computer-aided Translation (CAT) tools have attracted the attention of scholars who practice translation in various disciplines. The current study investigated undergraduate students' Perspectives on CAT tools and Machine Translation (MT). More specifically, it investigates to what extent CAT tools improve productivity and translation quality. Finally, it also explores the other merits of using CAT tools. The present study used a qualitative analysis and semi-structured interviews to answer the research questions. The findings indicate that most of the students have a positive attitude toward using CAT tools. Furthermore, the findings show that lexical, syntactic, and special use of expressions as well as collocations and words that have cultural connotations were the most challenging that the students encountered when using MT. In addition, improving productivity, enhancing quality, scalability, and connectivity are the four concepts mentioned by the subjects of the study as merits that made them use the CAT tool for translation other than using machine translation.

Keywords: Computer-aided translation tools, machine translation, productivity, quality, scalability, undergraduate students

Introduction
Nowadays, the development of technology in the last half of the 21st century and the emergence of the web as a supportive, informative tool have influenced how we study and practice translation (AbuSa'aleek, 2016). Therefore, it has been seen that many teachers, students, translators, and scholars in educational institutions and even in the business environment, use machine translation to facilitate the translation process. Hutchins (1986) defined machine translation as “the application of computers in the translation of texts, from one natural language into another” (p.15). Even though machine translation, like other technology, is improving all the time, it's impossible to picture it ever having the features of a skilled translator. Translators consider the knowledge of grammar, syntax, idioms, and the capacity to comprehend what is being stated in the text.

Furthermore, translators frequently specialize in specific fields of translation, allowing them to concentrate on their areas of expertise. However, machine translation may be advantageous for a considerable amount of translation. In more critical instances, though, it is just untrustworthy. It saves time and money, but it usually results in fragmented translations with lexical, syntactic, and semantic errors that a human translator never makes. Therefore, there must be a distinction between machine translation (MT) and Computer-assisted Translation (CAT) tools, which are the focus of the current study. These software tools assist translators by providing numerous translation options, making the process interactive between a human and a computer. However, some research on machine translation, such as by Gupta (2014) and Shuttleworth and Cowie (2014), focused on machine translation. Therefore, this study needs to explore students' attitudes toward computer-assisted translation vs. machine translation and find out the merits of CAT tools over MT among undergraduate translation students at Majmaah university students, who have already studied a CAT tool course in their bachelor's degree program.

Purpose of the study
The overarching goal of this qualitative case study was to explore students’ attitudes toward computer-aided translation merits over machine translation.

Objectives of the Study
This study is valuable for students who seek to translate many pages and enrich their knowledge of the recently used CAT tools software such as Matecat, Smartcat, and Memo. The translation memory software is the most well-known CAT tool that helps the students and translators. Moreover, this study also provides students with a wide range of computer skills and resources for novice translators, covering several translation-related Information technology (IT) topics from word processing to developing the Translation Memory (TM) system. Students will also learn computer-assisted terminology management (e.g., Software and Documentation Localization SDL Trados Studio 2017) and develop the functionality and impact of various desktop translation memory tools Land cloud-based translation memory systems. This study is the perfect introduction to modern electronic translation environments, providing students with practical advice on how information research, terminology management, and translation memory systems can best be integrated into the translation process. The study will also explore some new trends in the CAT tool.
Research Questions
The current study aims to answer the following questions:
1. To what extent do CAT tools improve productivity?
2. Does a CAT tool improve translation quality?
3. What are the other merits of using CAT tools?

Literature review
What is a CAT tool?
To access the influence of CAT tools on human creativity, it is, first and foremost, necessary to define what CAT tools are and give some background knowledge of their essential functions. A common misconception is that computer-aided translation tools are synonymous with machine translation systems, such as Google Translate (Koehn, 2009). However, whereas computers perform machine translation to replace human translators, computer-aided translation is done by human translators who use specialized software (CAT tools) such as Matecat and Memoq to increase their productivity. CAT tools have many features, including integrating dictionaries and performing quality assurance checks. Nonetheless, its four essential functions are the following: text segmentation, formation of translation units, usage of translation memory, and usage of termbases (Bruns, 2008:12-13). Below is a brief overview of these essential functions and their role. I came to know that The “CAT” in the CAT tool stands for “Computer Aided Translation” or “Computer-Assisted Translation,” but, as you might already know, it doesn't mean that a computer is completing the translation for you. CAT tools are different from “machine translation” – they assist a human translator in doing their work more quickly and managing their translation projects. CAT tools typically contain a translation memory, storing previous source and target translations for easy reference while working. Term bases are also an integral part of translation tools, giving translators the ability to develop bilingual glossaries in their subject areas.

CAT tools can include a wide range of different features. For example, some can work with different documents, such as PowerPoint presentations, without converting the text to a different file format. Some provide access to online terminology databases or help the translator manage translation memories better. Some are software-based, and some operate entirely in the cloud.

CAT tools work by segmenting the source text (usually in sentences) and presenting each segment so that the translator can enter the translation either below or next to the corresponding segment. The following are samples of CAT tools interfaces.

Table 1. The CAT tools interfaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAT tool</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trados</td>
<td>It is the biggest of all the big players in the CAT tool market. It is a complete translation software solution for translating, managing terminology, editing, and running LQA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MemoQ</td>
<td>It is one of the essential CAT tools with some valuable extras features, such as the translation preview pane that allows you to see the segment you are translating in context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MateCat: It is a free online CAT tool that offers users a variety of features.

Across: It is another fully-featured CAT tool that ticks all the boxes. It offers a complete translation environment, including translation memory and terminology management.

OmegaT: It might be the most popular free CAT tool out there. It is an open-source program that offers a full range of features and runs on Windows, Mac, and Linux.

Wordfast Anywhere: It is another fully-featured yet free CAT tool. It must be used online but allows users to create private TMs, TBs, etc. It also offers a connection to public translation databases.

SmartCAT: A CAT tool provides a platform for translators and clients to find each other.

CafeTran Espresso: It is a unique translation tool that can be used on Windows, Mac, or Linux. It handles most major file formats and is compatible with other major translation programs.

Déjà Vu: It is another popular CAT tool that offers an entire host of terminology management and translation memory features.

Virtual: It is a simple, free translation tool written in Python.

Pootle: It is a free translation management tool and interface. Unlike most CAT tools, it is designed explicitly for translating apps rather than documents.

Lokalize: It is a CAT tool focused on productivity and quality assurance. It is designed especially for software translation.

G-translator: It is a specialized translation tool for translating software that uses the gettext system.

Source: www.polilingua.com

As (Hutchins, 1986) opines, machine translators are “the software associated with computer systems in interpreting text messaging, from one normal language straight into another. “Moreover, a machine translator can translate texts; thus, it cannot convey the sense and implications. A machine or a piece of software cannot interpret the sense of anything and, more so, will not translate if it does not understand the meaning of the text.

For (Hutchins, 1986). However, suppose machine translators are considered translation tools or communication aids rather than a replacement for an individual translator. In that case, it will be discovered that they are significant and often are widely underestimated (Hovy et. al., 2002). Researchers want to stratify their concepts to discover the dissimilarities made by machine translators. Doing so will make it easier for designers to identify the most challenging issues and enhancements to the machine translators. (Shaalan, 2000) said that translating Arabic sentences into the English language was a problematic task. The difficulty comes from various sources: sentences in the Arabic language are too long. Another challenge is the sentence structure. An Arabic phrase is syntactically unclear and complex due to the usage of many grammatical relationships, order of words, content, and conjunctions. Therefore, most of the studies in Arabic Machine Translator primarily focus on the translation from English to Arabic.

Also, Alawneh et al. (2011) reiterated the need to deal with the arrangement and the order of words in a machine translation from the English language to the Arabic language. Also, it offered a hybrid-based strategy to handle those problems. Moreover, Alawneh et al., (2011) stated a couple of characteristics that impacted the ordering issue that was derived from the fact that various languages have different text orientations. Also, Soudi et. al., (2012) claimed that remarkable differences between the Syntax of the Arabic language and that of the English language are another source of the difficulty. Next, (Izwaini, 2006) said that an essential feature of Machine Translation is to maximize the meaning of the text so that minimum attempts and fewer times are
needed to comprehend the output. Therefore, the operator should not put upwards too much effort
to join the various elements of the translation. Moreover, Izwaini, (2006) said that an excellent
Machine Transaction should try to go for an additional step away from the essence level.
Therefore, procedures must be developed and improved so that the output can touch the excellent
product possible with slight editing needed.

Methodology
The present study used a qualitative approach to answer the research questions.

Population of study
The study population consists of all the students who study translation and English Language at
the Department of English, College of Education at Majmaah University.

Sample of the study
The study sample consisted of 25 Undergraduate English and Translation students at the
Department of English, College of Education at Majmaah University. English is their foreign
language, whereas Arabic is their native language. Their ages range from 20 to 23. All the samples
were male students. The sample of the study was third and fourth-year students. Only 22 students
participated in this study, twelve students from Third-year and ten from fourth-year.

Data Collection and Data Analysis
This research used various data-gathering techniques, including interviews and focus groups. The
interview data was primarily examined and discussed to determine the students’ attitudes toward
CAT tools and MT. In addition, moderately structured interviews with 22 students were performed
to learn more about their experiences of using computer-assisted translation (CAT) and Machine
Translation (MT). What is their perception of a CAT and MT and the challenges they faced? Which
types of tools do they prefer and why? What are the merits the respondents find?

Findings
The findings of the study are discussed under the following three headings:
The first is the undergraduate's previous experiences in various translation tools. The second is
the undergraduate students' changes while using CAT tools and MT. The third heading is the
merits of CAT tools and MT.

• Undergraduate perception towards using CAT tools and MT.
  The findings show that most students have a positive attitude toward using CAT tools. The
  following are (excerpts) from the students' interviews:
  S1 said, "I find the CAT tool more interactive than MT." S3 adds that a CAT tool gives
  more matches than MT. S6 supports the idea that the CAT tool is more appropriate for
  specialized translation. One of the interesting findings is that S5 said, “I don’t prefer to
  use CAT tools; instead, I prefer MT because it is faster and easy to use."

• Challenges that undergraduate students encounter while using the CAT tool and MT
  Most of the students' challenges when using MT are related to the lexical, syntactic, and
  particular use of expressions and collocations and words with cultural connotations. The
  following examples from the interview indicate that:
S12 said, "I come across this expression 'brain drain' instead of immigration of mind." Also, other students trigger the same examples that support the idea of syntactic problems when translating the following sentences 'United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization' in Arabic with the same grammatical pattern, which is different from English patterns 'المنظمة التعليمية، العلمية والثقافية للأمم المتحدة'. The underlined words in Arabic are nouns whereas, in English are adjectives respectively educational, scientific and cultural.

- The Merits of using CAT Tool and MT

Improving productivity, enhancing quality, scalability, and connectivity are the four concepts mentioned by the study subjects as merits that made them use the CAT tool for translation other than using machine translation. The following examples from the results of the structured interview are as follows:

Productivity stands for the large number of texts translated using the CAT tool. Such category of CAT tool merits expressed by some students as in the following response:

"I think CAT tool is better than traditional machine translation because it is more productive" (S3)
"To my opinion, quality and productivity are the most remarkable merits of CAT tool." (S20)
"I believe that connectivity and productivity are distinguishing merits of CAT tool" (S2)
"I think scalability and productivity are the obvious merit of CAT tool" (S5)

The interview data revealed that productivity was discussed numerous times. Then comes quality. The quality of translation in terms of similarity and equivalence between the source and target languages is highly considered in the following examples from the interview (Students from now on are referred to as “S”).

"I think quality and productivity are significant merits in CAT tool” (S4)
"To me, quality is best merit of CAT tool” (S1)
"Quality and connectivity, I guess” (S6)
"I experience that quality is one of the merits of using CAT tool” (S7)
"Translation looks perfect with a CAT tool” S9

When we look closely at the results of students 1, 4, 6, 9, and 7, one acknowledges that the quality merit is considerably used in the data. Connectivity is one of the benefits of a CAT tool is that you can work alone or with a group of translators sharing termbases, terminologies, and translations.

The following are samples from the interview.

"I guess connecting with colleagues while translating is useful to me” S17
"I find it helpful in improving my translation” S18
"Connecting difficult phrases and words with others helps me” S8
"I connect my translation with my friends and other “S10
“Connecting with peers in doing the translation is helpful.” S11

When we look closely at the results of students S8, S10, S11, S17, and S18, one acknowledged that the connectivity merit is considerably used in the data.

Of course, the topic of scalability means whatever the amount of content that needs to be translated by people, companies, organizations, or governments who are struggling to translate all the content they created into all the languages they want, a CAT tool can make a significant difference in how much a person or a company can translate.

These are some responses offered by students under examination:

“How huge is the content? A CAT tool can make the difference” S16

“One can scale the content and languages while translating using A CAT tool.” S14

“How big is the content to be translated? It is ok with a CAT tool.” S13

“A CAT tool is helpful in case of translating to different languages” S12

Some of the students also paid attention to scalability as one of the CAT tool merits, particularly (S12, S13, S14, and S16) who run the structured interview.

Discussion

The current study’s main results concern the students’ attitudes towards the advantages of the CAT tools compared with traditional machine translation. As we can see from the study findings discussed above, most undergraduate students prefer using the CAT tool. They support their arguments with objective concepts such as the interactive aspect of the CAT tools. This aspect of interactivity of the CAT tools is supported by O’Brien (2012). The types of challenges encountered by the subjects are lexical and syntactic. This is also witnessed in Nida (1984).

The merits of the various CAT tools can be categorized into four concepts: increasing productivity, quality, connectivity, and scalability. The majority of the student believed that productivity is the main merit of using a CAT tool compared to machine translation.

From the perspective of productivity, the current study accord with Todorova, (2020). The impact of CAT tools on the creativity of students of Translation and Interpreting. Moreover, this study addressed the idea of connectivity as shown in what O’Brien (2012) calls the ‘translator-computer interaction. Still, some of the subject's answers focus on quality as remarkable merit of a CAT tool which shows that a CAT tool can produce a quality translation because of the translator-computer interaction in translating segment by segment instead of a whole text in the case of machine translation as stated by O’Brien (2012) and Todorova (2020). As shown from the data, some responses indicate that productivity and scalability are unique; a CAT tool merit over machine translation such as google translate. However, there are some crucial merits of the CAT tools that the subjects of study don't mention, such as the translation memory, termbase, and dictionaries that make the CAT tool faster and more authentic in terms of its quality in translation. Another feature of CAT is the translation memory tool which is not the same as the terminology tool.

Translation memory is a database that constantly captures your translations as you do your work and stores them for future use. It stores larger pieces of text. Translations are stored
in so-called translation units (source and target language). This allows a translator to save time by never translating the same sentence twice. Garcia (2015). The more you translate, the larger your translation memory will become, making it easier to do larger projects and increase efficiency. This tool is handy when working on long projects containing repetitive portions of text. Still, some researchers' justifications of the CAT tool merits over traditional machine translation supported by my results such as Çetiner (2018) and Bundgaard et al. (2016); Granell-Zafra (2006) and Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey (2014) And also it is great that you know that every next project similar to the previous will have a better pre-translation, meaning they will be of better quality. As a result, you will spend less time translating them. With these options, your terminology and writing style remains consistent. Your database is constantly expanding, and it is always available for any future project.

Moreover, a termbase can help you deliver a more accurate and high-quality translation, after all, because it can remind you how some things are translated in a specific way. In addition to the dictionaries that give the exact meaning of any term. So all these features of the CAT tool entail its quality over machine translation.

Conclusion
The study explores undergraduate students' perspectives on CAT tools and MT at the English Department, Majmaah University, Saudi Arabia. This research offers insight into the merits of the CAT tools as used to help translators improve and support their translation process. The study results indicate the CAT tools are more appropriate for undergraduate students and translators than MT for several reasons: productivity, accuracy, connectivity, scalability, and quality. It saves time and helps you to produce good-quality translations. On the other hand, MT is widely used today, but its accuracy levels are low, and it is very often unacceptable, particularly for specialized translation. In addition, it required meticulous editing and improvement.

Acknowledgment
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The Correlation between Foreign Language Apprehension and Foreign Language Gaiety and their Impacts on the Ideal L2 Self for EFL Learners

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Abstract
As evidenced by recent studies in the fields of positive psychology and psycholinguistics, learners' emotions and thoughts while learning a second language are believed to generate sophisticated and dynamic linkages that contribute to their motivational as well as linguistic outcomes. This study aims to evaluate foreign language gaiety (FLG) and foreign language apprehension (FLA) as determinants of the ideal second language (L2) self for Saudi EFL learners. The basic research question that this study attempts to answer is: “What is the impact of EL elation and apprehension on PSAU learners’ ideal L2 self?” An online survey incorporating the three scales in question was completed by 116 EFL male and female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU) in the College of Science and Humanities (CSH). To examine the reliability of this research study, the Cronbach Alpha value of ≥ 0.70 is regarded as reliable and acceptable. The study results showed a strong positive correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ EF Gaiety and their ideal L2 self. Further, there was a strong negative correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Apprehension and their ideal L2 self. The study concluded that PSAU EFL learners do not enjoy studying English as a foreign language. Their ideal L2 self is tremendously affected by the high rates of apprehension and the low degrees of EF gaiety.

Keywords: foreign language apprehension, foreign language gaiety, ideal second language self, university EFL Learners

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1.0 Introduction

The research studies in the fields of teaching, learning, applied linguistics, positive psychology, and psycholinguistics have seen a significant change from teacher-centered to student-centered education (Murphy, Eduljee, & Croteau, 2021). More focus has been placed on learning and learners rather than instruction and instructors (Noriega, Bonet, & Heppell, 2013). Since English as a Foreign Language progresses rapidly to learner-centered education, multiple academics in various contexts have turned their attention to determining how EFL learners learn and what variables influence their performance (Nazari, 2019).

The ideal L2 self is the L2-specific component of the learner’s ideal self (Huiwen, Chia, & Azlan, 2020). It has been estimated as a characteristic that increases motivated L2 learning behavior. The ideal L2 self is a fundamental component of Dörnyei’s (2003) and Ghasemi’s (2018) L2 motivating self-systems. It refers to the ideal image maintained in learners' minds of the type of L2 user they aim to become in the future (Ghasemi, 2018). For example, if people aspire to be good L2 speakers, they can use their imagined L2 self to motivate them to study the language because they want to decrease the gap between their ideal and actual selves. Furthermore, some research studies concluded that the ideal L2 self is linked to a variety of factors, including communication willingness and enthusiastic use of the language (Huiwen et al., 2020).

According to some studies with a more comprehensive view of negative and positive classroom feelings, apprehension impedes learners’ cognitive processing, while positive emotions contribute to widening their cognitive abilities (Matsuda & Gobel, 2001). Foreign language classroom apprehension (FLCA) and foreign language learning (FLE) have been identified as two important variables in predicting L2 outcomes (Henshaw, 2015). Several EFL researchers have expressed an interest in studying the impact of FLCA and FLE on general English courses (Matsuda & Gobel, 2001), learners' performance (Li, 2021), and gender (Ra & Rhee, 2018). Nonetheless, no indication of an ideal L2 self is found in their research.

Despite the abundance of published research on the impact of foreign language apprehension and foreign language elation on L2 learning, few empirical investigations in the field of EFL have examined such constructs with a focus on the ideal L2 self (Chua, Lin, & Azlan, 2020). As a result, there appears to be a scarcity of research into the role of foreign language apprehension and foreign language elation in anticipating the ideal L2 self in EFL students. To put it another way, it is yet unknown whether and how FL apprehension and FL elation influence the ideal L2 self. The goal of this study is to explore the joint influence of FL apprehension and FL elation on the ideal L2 self among Saudi EFL students to fill the gaps and throw more light on the function of these two variables in predicting the ideal L2 self. This study contributes to the current literature by combining these variables.

2.0 Review of literature

Language apprehension, sometimes called language anxiety, is a type of negative emotional and motivational state that arises when learners are confronted with threatening situations (Sparks & Patton, 2013). An increasing amount of study attention has been focused on apprehension as a negative emotion in the realm of L2 learning. Apprehension is the most extensively studied emotion among negative feelings in L2 research (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014).

Clifford and Cox (2013) found an inverse relationship between FL anxiety and proficiency scores in their investigation. Based on Horwitz and Cope (1986), Clifford and Cox (2013) created the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, which ushered in a new era in apprehension.
research. They also asserted that foreign language apprehension and general anxiety are linked. With the introduction of this negative emotion, classroom apprehension has been the focus of interest since the emergence of emotion research in L2 because of its strong impact on students' cognitive L2 performance and implications for L2 outcomes. Foreign language apprehension has been found to have a deleterious impact on academic achievement in this line of research.

Akpur (2017) examined the relationship between FL apprehension and FL achievement among primary school learners. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was used to measure FL apprehension, and its impact on FL achievement was evaluated using low-stakes assessments as well as high-stakes formal tests. FL apprehension inversely influenced participants' achievement. The findings also revealed a higher link between high-stakes formal exams and low-stakes regular assessments.

In terms of the factors that influence FL anxiety, Danesh and Shahnazari (2020) have highlighted the importance of motivation in defining learners' anxiety levels. The findings revealed a negative relationship between general language apprehension and self-motivation in English learning. Dörnyei (2003) also examined the link between Turkish EFL learners' beliefs and language anxiety. The results showed that Turkish EFL learners' negative perceptions of English and classroom anxiety were strongly connected to some fears.

Kakupa (2019), for example, examined the influence of socio-biographical and language characteristics in predicting Chinese university students' FL anxiety in English. Kakupa found that FL anxiety and worries were associated with frequent language use, international experience, geographic background, self-perceived oral competencies, age of commencement of acquisition, and language achievement level. Further findings revealed that worries and apprehension can be seen both within and outside the classroom, depending on the source.

Yoshida (2013) stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, both teachers and learners were likely to face a significant level of general worry, which led to the emergence of remote and online language learning in recent years. Because online language learners are requested to communicate with their teacher and classmates in the target language using audio and video resources, they may experience anxiety related to both the language and the technology.

Positive emotions, such as growth mindset joy, well-being (Conradson, 2016), and grit (Zeng et al., 2016), have gotten a lot of attention in recent years. The commonly studied pleasant emotion, enjoyment, is included in this list. Since it was identified as the counterpart of anxiety and enjoyment, which can be thought of as enjoyment experienced when learning a second language, has gotten a lot of attention. The FLE scale, first proposed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016), has remained the most widely accepted method for assessing FLE. Researchers have considered the indispensability of positive emotions to balance research material that has explored the role of negative emotions, particularly linguistic anxiety (Zohar, Livne, & Fine, 2003). Negative and positive emotions, according to Cao (2014) and Sparks and Patton (2013), are prominent individual characteristics that influence classroom interactions.

### 2.1 Ideal L2 Self

Akpur (2017)'s findings influenced and encouraged primary research on L2 motivation. Most L2 motivation theories, in retrospect, were founded on Akpur (2017)’s socio-educational model, which was a highly classic understanding of the integrative motive. Despite its significance, the notion of integration has been a source of criticism since the 1990s. Integration, for example, does not make sense in FL classrooms if students are learning a foreign language as a subject.
without the required exposure to the target language (e.g., to learn English as a foreign language in China). Given that Akpur (2017)'s model was not feasible for educational contexts, particularly EFL settings, Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) proposed a new L2 theory. This construct, comprising the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and L2 experience, has allowed for more variables to be examined within L2 motivation, and it may be applied in a range of linguistic and cultural circumstances.

In recent decades, researchers have been looking at the two essential components of Dewaele and Alfawzan’s (2018) recommended construct, the ought-to L2 self and the ideal L2 self in various L2 scenarios. The ideal L2 self, which has been defined as a positive self-image that L2 learners desire to acquire in the future about learning the L2, has been seen as a crucial concept in determining and realizing language learning motivation. According to Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018), when seeking to bridge the gap and distance between one's existing L2 skills and prospective L2 learning objectives, the ideal L2 self serves as a powerful motivation. In recent years, a slew of studies has been done to shed light on the link between the ideal L2 self and FLE (e.g., Ghasemi, 2018; Gupta & Gueneau, 2021; Henshaw, 2015).

According to the studies mentioned above, most of the research has either compared and contrasted FL elation and FL apprehension or investigated their link with key learner characteristics. Despite this, no empirical investigation into the role of both foreign language enjoyment and FLCA in predicting optimal L2 self has been conducted. There has also been no research into ideal L2 self, FLE, or FLCA structures. The study of Yin (2021) is the only one that has touched on this topic in part (2021). The researchers wanted to explore how learners' L2 writing selves influence L2 writing accomplishment both directly and indirectly via anxiety and enjoyment.

3. Research Problem

Upon surveying and examining the pertinent literature, the researcher noticed that there is a consensus among Saudi researchers in addition to EFL instructors that PSAU EFL students are struggling in speaking, listening, writing, and reading classes. Psychologically, some Saudi EFL university students do not enjoy learning English as a foreign language at all. For these learners, English represents a psychological burden rather than a source of enjoyment and elation (Yoshida, 2013; Rathiga, 2014; Yin, 2021). Furthermore, some researchers reported that Saudi EFL male and female learners’ language capabilities are below mediocre and need much amelioration. They attributed their results to psychological reasons, such as class anxiety, class absent-mindedness, obsession, loneliness, depression, guilt, and feelings of inadequacy (Bradford, 1982; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Robinson, 2010; Balamani & Sert, 2017).

These psychological problems do not only have concrete existence in governmental schools but also in private ones in addition to Saudi governmental and private universities. Even when the researchers set their Saudi subjects into experimental and control groups to solve these psychological problems, the effect of any given treatment was provisional (Oreopoulos, 1993; Nazari, 2019; Murphy, Eduljee, & Croteau, 2021). The Saudi university students have their ideal L2 self, a modal of language professionalism that they try to attain. The ideal L2 self may be affected by the psychological problems they encounter in EFL classes. Therefore, this research study tries to answer the following question: “What is the impact of EL elation and apprehension on PSAU learners’ ideal L2 self?” To answer this question, the researcher set some sub-questions derived from the research problem:
(1) Do PSAU EFL learners enjoy learning English as a foreign language?"
(2) Do PSAU EFL learners experience any kind of apprehension during learning English as a foreign language?"
(3) To which level of satisfaction does PSAU EFL learners’ ideal L2 self reach?
(4) What is the correlation between Ideal L2 self and FL Gaiety and FL Apprehension?

4.0 Materials and Methods
4.1 Participants
A total of 116 English-major students from the Department of English at the College of Science and Humanities, Al-Kharj. The students replied to a foreign Language Elation Scale (adapted from Dewaele, 2019) and a Foreign Language Apprehension Scale (adapted from Jiang and Dewaele, 2019). The respondents are undergraduate English majors from the male and female sections. The participants constitute a sample of 55 males and 61 females ranging in age from 17 to 21, with a mean age of 19. The length of time they had spent learning English ranged from 13 to 16 years, with an average of 14.5 years.

4.2 Instruments
4.2.1 Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale
Ten items were adapted from Jiang and Dewaele for this scale (2019). The scale statements express both the communal and private parts of foreign language enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Every item was assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," with "strongly disagree" being the most extreme.

Table 1. Foreign language enjoyment scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Scale Items</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5) SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel quite elated while I am writing or reading in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I get pleased when knowing that I am going to be called on to read in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I get displeased when I must read or write in English without any prior preparation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I never feel dissatisfied in speaking or listening classes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>When I speak English, I feel exhilaration and self-confident.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>When I speak or read in English in front of other students, I feel delighted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>When I listen to English, I get debonair and frustrated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>It makes me feel proud and comfortable to volunteer to go out first and speak or write in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>When the language teacher asks me to speak in English that I have prepared in advance, I get super delighted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I enjoy my English classes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.2 Foreign Language Classroom anxiety scale
The fifteen components of this scale, developed by Jiang and Dewaele (2019), dealt with physiological symptoms of worry, unease, and lack of confidence. The scale measures two types of anxiety: mild and severe anxiety. Items with low anxiety were reverse-coded for consistency in calculating the total score. Every item was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, with “strongly disagree” being the most extreme.

Table 2. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
The Correlation between Foreign Language Apprehension

Abdulaal, Sadek, Ageli, Al-Hawamdeh & Hal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Scale Items</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5) SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I do not feel quite confident while I am speaking or reading in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I tremble when knowing that I am going to be called on to speak English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I get nervous when I must speak English without any prior preparation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I can feel so nervous in a speaking class that I forget what I know.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>When I speak English, I feel confident.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>When I speak English in front of other students, I feel quite self-conscious.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>When I read in English, I get uncomfortable and confused.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I'm frightened other classmates will make fun of me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>When I am asked to say what I have prepared in advance, I get nervous.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I have no apprehensions about speaking English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>When I'm about to be called on, I can feel my heart pumping.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>When I'm speaking English, I feel at ease.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>It makes me feel uncomfortable to volunteer to go out first and speak in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I am confident in my ability to communicate in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I'm becoming increasingly perplexed as I take more language tests.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3 Ideal L2 Self Scale

Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2012) updated the eight items on the Ideal L2 Self Scale. The purpose of this assessment was to look at the learners' ideal L2 self in terms of the English language. Every item was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," with "strongly disagree" being the most extreme.

Table 3. Ideal L2 Self Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Scale Items</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5) SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I feel glad to be able to read English textbooks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I am delighted to read English words around me in streets and stores.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I could not learn English in the past, but now I master it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I enjoy listening to English movies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>My listening has been developed in the last couple of years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Learning English had a significant impact on my life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Speaking in English is rewarding for me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I feel no development in my English level in comparison with the last year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Research Procedures

Since this research study was developed as a correlational examination, the data were obtained by giving the three measuring instruments of the three constructs (i.e., FL elation, FL apprehension, and ideal L2 self) to the EFL male and female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in College of Science and Humanities. The questions were put together in the form of an online survey using the Google Docs tool. The data collection began in the summer of 2021, with the assistance of a few English-major university instructors who lectured at several Saudi universities. A link to the Google Docs survey was sent to these teachers. They then emailed...
the URLs to their English major undergraduate students via Telegram or WhatsApp groups, instructing them to respond to the survey items. It took about two months to collect the data.

6. Instrument Reliability and Validity

To examine the reliability of this research study, the Cronbach Alpha value of ≤ 0.60 is considered not reliable, while that of ≥ 0.70 is regarded as reliable and acceptable. The reliability test for this study is tabulated in Tables (4) and (5). To attain both external validity and representativeness, the participants were randomly selected.

Table 4. Alpha Cronbach Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Alpha Cronbach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (A)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (B)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal L2 Self Scale (C)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.891</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Alpha Cronbach for each item if excluded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>82.12</td>
<td>534.215</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td>.9610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>83.21</td>
<td>524.815</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>.9620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA3</td>
<td>83.10</td>
<td>533.515</td>
<td>.559</td>
<td>.9560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA4</td>
<td>82.19</td>
<td>522.346</td>
<td>.576</td>
<td>.9030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA5</td>
<td>82.99</td>
<td>503.167</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>.9550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA6</td>
<td>82.81</td>
<td>556.074</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>.9090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA7</td>
<td>83.06</td>
<td>544.082</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td>.9810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA8</td>
<td>82.35</td>
<td>565.719</td>
<td>.689</td>
<td>.9980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA9</td>
<td>81.05</td>
<td>554.599</td>
<td>.555</td>
<td>.9090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA10</td>
<td>82.81</td>
<td>559.682</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.9910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB11</td>
<td>81.67</td>
<td>527.484</td>
<td>.641</td>
<td>.9630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB12</td>
<td>82.82</td>
<td>508.519</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.9980</td>
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<tr>
<td>SB13</td>
<td>82.65</td>
<td>548.755</td>
<td>.641</td>
<td>.9420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB14</td>
<td>83.42</td>
<td>535.806</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.9560</td>
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<tr>
<td>SB15</td>
<td>82.95</td>
<td>561.482</td>
<td>.638</td>
<td>.9510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB16</td>
<td>83.90</td>
<td>519.553</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.9510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB17</td>
<td>82.75</td>
<td>501.752</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.9530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB18</td>
<td>83.43</td>
<td>511.106</td>
<td>.615</td>
<td>.9550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB19</td>
<td>82.84</td>
<td>524.459</td>
<td>.644</td>
<td>.9570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB20</td>
<td>83.94</td>
<td>532.368</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.9520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB21</td>
<td>83.73</td>
<td>544.826</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.9540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB22</td>
<td>82.92</td>
<td>535.350</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>.9560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB23</td>
<td>82.91</td>
<td>517.372</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>.9580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB24</td>
<td>83.58</td>
<td>561.759</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>.9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB25</td>
<td>81.63</td>
<td>552.832</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td>.9580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC26</td>
<td>83.56</td>
<td>541.451</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td>.9460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC27</td>
<td>82.83</td>
<td>512.650</td>
<td>.677</td>
<td>.9640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC28</td>
<td>82.12</td>
<td>515.187</td>
<td>.662</td>
<td>.9220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Results

The first question that this study attempts to answer is “Do PSAU EFL learners enjoy learning English as a foreign language?” To answer this question, table (6) below shows the descriptive analyses of the FL Gaiety Scale. Table (6) illustrates that item [1] — *I feel quite elated while I am writing or reading in English* — has scored the highest mean as M= 4.66 and SD= 1.15, with 65 % degree of disagreement comprising 75.4 respondents who strongly disagree with this statement, and 2.6%, (N=3.016) respondents strongly agree to this statement. Item [9] – When the language teacher asks me to speak in English that I have prepared in advance, I get super delighted – scored the lowest mean as M=1.81 and SD =0.56 with 77.0 % degree of disagreement and N = 89 respondents. Item [2] – I get pleased when knowing that I am going to be called on to read in English – comes second to item [1] with M= 4.56, SD = 0.76, and 60.1 % degree of strong disagreement (N= 69.7). Item [6] – When I speak or read in English in front of other students, I feel delighted– comes third to item [1] with M= 4.51, SD = 0.45, and 76.1% degree of strong disagreement and 12.2% of disagreement to this statement (N= 102.4)

Table 6. Descriptive Analyses for PSAU EFL Learners’ FL Gaiety Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Agreement Scale</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second question that this study attempts to answer is “Do PSAU EFL learners experience any kind of apprehension during learning English as a foreign language?” To answer this question, table (7) shows the descriptive analyses of the FL Classroom Anxiety Scale. Table (7) below shows that item [17] — *When I read in English, I get uncomfortable and confused* — has scored the highest mean as M= 3.68 and SD= 0.77, with 65.7 % degree of agreement comprising

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76.2 respondents who agree to this statement. Item [20] – *I have no apprehensions about speaking English* – scored the lowest mean as M=1.31 and SD = 0.71 with 60.5 % degree of strong disagreement and N = 70.18 respondents. Item [22] – *When I'm speaking English, I feel at ease* – comes second to item [17] with M= 3.67, SD = 2.87, and 2.2% degree of strong agreement (N= 2.55). Item [13] – *I get nervous when I must speak English without any prior preparation* – comes immediately before item [20] with M= 1.64, SD = 0.48, and 55.4% degree of strong agreement and 14.9 % of disagreement with this statement.

Table 7. *Descriptive analyses for PSAU EFL learners’ FL Classroom Anxiety Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I do not feel quite confident while I am speaking or reading in English.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I tremble when knowing that I am going to be called on to speak English.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I get nervous when I must speak English without any prior preparation.</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I can feel so nervous in a speaking class that I forget what I know.</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>When I speak English, I feel confident.</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>When I speak English in front of other students, I feel quite self-conscious.</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>When I read in English, I get uncomfortable and confused.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I'm frightened other classmates will make fun of me.</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>When the language teacher asks me to speak in English that I have prepared in advance, I get nervous.</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I have no apprehensions about speaking English.</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>When I'm about to be called on, I can feel my heart pumping.</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>When I'm speaking English, I feel at ease.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>It makes me feel uncomfortable to volunteer to go out first and speak or write in English.</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.80</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I am confident in my ability to communicate in English.</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I'm becoming increasingly perplexed as I take more language tests.</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third question that this study attempts to answer is “To which level of satisfaction, does PSAU EFL learners’ ideal L2 Self reach?” To answer this question, table (8) below shows the descriptive analyses of the FL Ideal L2 Scale. Table (8) below shows that item [28] — *I could not learn English in the past, but now I master it* —has scored the highest mean as M= 3.55 and SD=1.32, with 64.4 % degree of strong disagreement comprising 74.7 respondents who strongly reject this statement. Item [30] – *My listening has been developed in the last couple of years* – scored the lowest mean as M=1.04 and SD = 0.45 with 1.2 % degree of strong agreement and N = 1.3 respondents. Item [33] – *I do not feel any development in my English level in comparison with the last year* – comes second to item [28] with M= 3.49, SD = 0.64, and 60.8% degree of agreement (N= 70.29). Item [31] – *Learning English has a significant impact on my life* – comes immediately before item [30] with M= 1.03, SD = 0.81, and 50.7% degree of neuter response and 15.3 % agreement to this statement.
Table 8. Descriptive Analyses for PSAU EFL Learners’ FL Ideal L2 Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Agreement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I feel glad to be able to read English textbooks</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>25.1 1.80 11.0 59.1 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I am delighted to read English words around me in streets and stores.</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>2.3 15.8 14.8 12.7 54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I could not learn English in the past, but now I master it.</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>64.4 7.30 16.0 5.0 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I enjoy listening to English movies.</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>3.0 2.20 74.5 13.3 7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>My listening has been developed in the last couple of years.</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>13.3 75.1 3.2 7.2 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Learning English has had a significant impact on my life.</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>10.5 13.1 50.7 15.3 10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Speaking in English is rewarding for me.</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>12.6 15.7 13.4 12.8 45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I do not feel any development in my English level in comparison with the last year.</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>7.70 6.8 9.80 60.8 14.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fourth research question, “What is the correlation between Ideal L2 Self and FL Gaiety and FL Apprehension?”, is answered by conducting Pearson Coefficient Correlation which has been employed to probe the correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Gaiety and their ideal L2 Self. The results revealed that there was a strong positive correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Gaiety and their ideal L2 self, as R=0.722 (i.e., the coefficient value here lies between ± 0.50 and ± 1 and (P =.000). Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted as p-value is less than 0.05.

Pearson Coefficient Correlation has also been used to examine the correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Apprehension and their ideal L2 Self. The results revealed that there was a strong negative correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Apprehension and their ideal L2 self, as R= - 0.932 (i.e., the coefficient value here lies between 0. 0 and -1 and (P =.000). Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) is totally, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted as p-value is less than 0.05.

Pearson Coefficient Correlation has also been used to check the correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Apprehension and FL Gaiety. The results revealed that there was a negative correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Apprehension and FL Gaiety, as R= - 0.982 (i.e., the coefficient value here lies between 0. 0 and -1 and (P =.000). Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) stating that there is no linear correlation is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) stating that there is a correlation between the two variables is accepted as p-value is less than 0.05.

Table 9. Pearson Coefficient Correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample 1</th>
<th>Sample 2</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>95% CI for ρ</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FL Gaiety</td>
<td>Ideal L2 Self</td>
<td>0.722</td>
<td>(0.652, 0.792)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL Apprehension</td>
<td>Ideal L2 Self</td>
<td>-0.932</td>
<td>(-0.976, -0.888)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL Gaiety</td>
<td>FL Apprehension</td>
<td>-0.982</td>
<td>(-0.989, -0.976)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Discussion
The current study investigated the joint influence of negative and positive emotions on the ideal L2 self to shed much light on the role of negative and positive emotions in L2 learning. This study investigated whether and how FL Apprehension and FL Gaiety could predict the ideal L2 self, which is a key component of the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2003).

The first question that this study attempts to answer is “Do PSAU EFL learners enjoy learning English as a foreign language?” The results showed that the PSAU EFL do not enjoy studying English as a foreign language as item [6] – *When I speak or read in English in front of other students, I feel delighted* – comes third to item [1] with M= 4.51, SD = 0.45, and 76.1% degree of strong disagreement and 12.2% of disagreement to this statement (N= 102.4). This is partially in agreement with other empirical studies (e.g., Mohammed & Sanos, 2018; Alseadan, 2021; Alsiyat, 2021), which reported low levels of gaiety and exhilaration from the Saudi learners in their EFL classes. The researcher attributed this low level of EFL gaiety and enjoyment in Saudi EFL classes to the weak competencies of the learners as they in the primary and preparatory stages are not well-equipped with the necessary language skills.

The second question that this study attempts to answer is “Do PSAU EFL learners experience any kind of apprehension during learning English as a foreign language?” The results showed that PSAU EFL learners are experiencing elevated levels of apprehension in their EFL classes as item [20] – *I have no apprehensions about speaking English* – scored the lowest mean as M=1.31and SD = 0.71 with 60.5 % degree of strong disagreement and N = 70.18 respondents.

The third question that this study attempts to answer is “To which level of satisfaction, does PSAU EFL learners’ ideal L2 Self reach?” The results showed that PSAU EFL learners’ ideal L2 self is tremendously affected by the high rates of apprehension and the low degrees of EF gaiety as item [28] — *I could not learn English in the past, but now I master it* — has scored the highest mean as M= 3.55 and SD= 1.32, with 64.4 % degree of strong disagreement comprising 74.7 respondents who strongly reject this statement. This finding is in agreement with Çagatay and Erten (2020) who reported that EFL learners’ ideal L2 self is affected by their emotions of anxiety and enjoyment in their educational settings. The research attributed the low degrees of Ideal L2 self experienced by PSAU.

The fourth research question is answered by conducting Pearson Coefficient Correlation which has been employed to probe the correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Gaiety and their ideal L2 Self. The results revealed that there was a strong positive correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ EF Gaiety and their ideal L2 self, (R=0.722). The results also revealed that there was a strong negative correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Apprehension and their ideal L2 self, as R= - 0.932. The findings also showed that there was a strong negative correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Apprehension and FL Gaiety, as R= - 0.982.

| Table 10. Correlations between EA Apprehension, Gaiety, and ideal L2 Self |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| EF Apprehension (+) | EF Gaiety (+) |
| EF Apprehension | 000 | (-) |
| EF Gaiety | (-) | 000 |
| Ideal L2 Self | (-) | (+) |

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9. Conclusion
PSAU EFL learners do not enjoy studying English as a foreign language. Further, they are experiencing an elevated level of apprehension in their EFL classes. Their ideal L2 self is tremendously affected by the high rates of apprehension and the low degrees of EF gaiety. A strong positive correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ EF Gaiety and their ideal L2 self was reported. There was a strong negative correlation between the PSAU EFL learners’ FL Apprehension and their ideal L2 self.

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References


Improving Language Assessment Literacy for In-Service Saudi EFL Teachers

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Abstract
A teacher’s ability to create and implement high-quality assessments is a key component of assessment literacy. Therefore, improving teachers’ language assessment literacy (LAL) is one of the most important factors in assuring the quality of language testing and assessment (LTA). Thus, this study aimed to investigate the perceived level of LAL among Saudi in-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. Additionally, it aimed to identify the aspects of LAL that in-service EFL teachers wish to improve through further professional assessment training. Two research questions were formulated to achieve the study aims; a) what is the perceived level of LAL among Saudi in-service EFL teachers? b) What aspects of LAL do in-service EFL teachers wish to improve through further professional training? A questionnaire was administered to collect the data. Fifty EFL female instructors at King Abdulaziz University responded to the online questionnaire. To analyze the data, SPSS software was used. Regarding teachers’ perceived level of LAL, the results indicated that Saudi EFL teachers lack a well-developed knowledge of assessment literacy. The findings showed that the majority of the teachers received either no training or basic training in LAL. In regard to teachers’ training needs, the findings highlighted that there is a need for training in nearly all the aspects of LAL, with priority being given to different content areas of LTA. Finally, the study recommended providing Saudi EFL teachers with sufficient professional language assessment training.

Keywords: Content of assessment, language assessment literacy, language testing, Saudi EFL teachers.
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Introduction

It is widely accepted that one of the most challenging aspects of a teacher’s job is assessing students’ performance (Huang & He, 2016). Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Language learning assessment is not only a means to evaluate students’ progress and improve their achievement but also a way to enhance the learning process (Earl, 2003). Since teachers play a central role in assessment, it is essential that they have a sufficient level of language assessment literacy (LAL) so that they may effectively and fairly assess their students’ learning. (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Koh et al., 2018; Koh, 2011).

Stiggins (1991) defined assessment literacy as teachers’ knowledge of both the underlying principles and the skills needed to evaluate student learning. Furthermore, those who are assessment literate should know what to assess, how to assess, what challenges to expect, and how to overcome them (Stiggins, 1995). This means assessment-literate teachers should be knowledgeable about how to use different kinds of assessment to assist students, how to effectively and accurately convey assessment results, how to give feedback to their students, and how to use the results to improve the learning process.

Due to its significance, an increasing number of studies have been conducted that attempt to measure teachers’ assessment literacy in various contexts and aspects (Berry et al., 2019; Fulcher, 2012; Hasselgreen et al., 2004; Lam, 2015; Mendoza, 2009; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). However, few studies have explored the language assessment literacy of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia (Hakim, 2015; Umer et al., 2018). Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate the perceived level of LAL among Saudi in-service EFL teachers. Additionally, it aimed to identify the aspects of LAL that in-service EFL teachers wish to improve through further professional assessment training.

Literature Review

Language Assessment Literacy

In a broader sense, the term “language assessment literacy” refers to educators’ and stakeholders’ ability to understand what, why and how to assess, the possible problems with assessment, and the negative consequences of inaccurate assessment (Stiggins, 2002). Fulcher’s (2012) definition of LAL is based on his research of language teachers’ assessment training needs. Fulcher (2012) concluded that LAL refers to:

- The knowledge, skills, and abilities required to design, develop, maintain, or evaluate large-scale standardized and/or classroom-based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice (Fulcher, 2012, p. 125).

Similarly, Davies (2008) noted that LAL has three components: skills, knowledge, and principles. Skills refers to the practical application of knowledge in test analysis and design, and knowledge refers to the “relevant background in measurement and language description” (p. 328). Principles encompasses social-related context issues, such as test fairness and test ethics.

Conversely, Newfields (2006) has a different perspective on the concept of assessment literacy. He defined LAL according to the viewpoints of stakeholders, such as students, teachers,
and test developers. For students, LAL refers to knowing how to perform well on exams. For teachers, it is associated with the ability to grade students accurately and ethically. For test developers, every aspect of their work is related to assessment literacy. Similarly, Pill and Harding (2013) viewed LAL as a “repertoire of competences that enable an individual to understand, evaluate and, in some cases, create language tests and analyze test data” (p. 282). They noted that different kinds of expertise or specializations require different levels of assessment literacy. For instance, the level of assessment literacy required by practitioners, such as test designers, teachers, and school principals, is quite different from the level required for non-practitioners, such as test takers.

### Teachers’ Language Assessment Literacy

According to Harding and Kremmel (2016), because language teachers are the key users of language assessment, they must be familiar with and proficient in its practices. EFL teachers play an essential role in preparing and using language assessments, and a great deal of research has examined language teachers’ perceptions, needs, and knowledge of assessment. On the one hand, some studies have found that teachers lack knowledge related to language assessment (Fulcher, 2012; Lam, 2015). On the other hand, some studies claim teachers may be aware of the skills, knowledge, and concepts required in assessment, but they do not put them into practice (Shim, 2009; Muoz et al., 2012). A study conducted by Shim (2009) used a questionnaire and interviews with some of the study’s participants to evaluate instructors’ beliefs and practices surrounding classroom-based English language evaluation. The findings showed that teachers were assessment literate and aware of the principles of assessment and testing; however, they did not put all the principles into practice.

Similarly, Muoz et al. (2012) investigated sixty-two Colombian teachers’ opinions of assessment. They found a gap between teachers’ attitudes and the practices that needed to be addressed through teacher training courses. Using teacher survey responses and focus group interviews, Qassim (2008) examined the factors that influenced teachers’ assessment procedures in public secondary schools in Qatar. The majority of instructors stated that although they were assessment literate, they could not connect their knowledge to their practice. The study presented the following reasons for this disconnect: curriculum workload, teaching time, and class size, all of which have been identified as variables that hamper the use of various forms of assessment in the classroom. These factors should be considered when training teachers so they can more effectively apply what they have learned about LAL.

### EFL Teachers’ Language Assessment Training Needs

Since many studies have confirmed the importance of formal assessment training for EFL teachers, knowing where and how to start a process of professional assessment training is crucial for ensuring a positive outcome. Fulcher (2012) used an online survey to identify the training needs of foreign language teachers. His findings implied that language teachers are aware of the aspects of language assessment that are not currently addressed in available training materials. Therefore, accessible and practical materials are needed to help them improve their assessment literacy. Mendoza (2009) found that teachers frequently and inappropriately use summative rather than formative assessments. They also lack knowledge of critical aspects of language assessment, such as the different types of language assessment, providing effective feedback to students, and ethical
issues related to testing and assessment. Similarly, DeLuca and Klinger (2010) discovered that while 288 Canadian EFL teachers were aware of summative evaluations, they were unfamiliar with formative assessment. Therefore, DeLuca and Klinger emphasized the need for direct education in the development of assessment literacy in teachers.

Furthermore, it is important that the type of training and professional development offered is tailored to teachers’ needs. Hasselgreen et al. (2004) surveyed teachers, teacher trainers, and experts in language assessment from thirty-seven European countries. They were asked to state the extent to which they had received formal training and the degree to which they believed there was a need for training. The survey addressed four aspects of assessment: classroom-focused assessment, purposes of assessment, content and concepts of assessment, and external testing and exams. The results revealed that for classroom-focused assessment, teachers often had little training in using ready-made assessments, delivering comments, or employing informal or continuous assessment. Despite their perception that there was no need for training in using ready-made exams, they did identify a need for training in test preparation, evaluating findings, offering feedback, and using self-assessment and portfolios. Regarding the areas of selecting the purposes of assessment, granting final certificates, and selecting the students’ needs, teachers reported that they frequently performed these aspects without having received any training.

A mixed methods study by Vogt and Tsagari (2014) explored the same aspects of language assessment that were investigated by Hasselgreen et al. (2004). However, in order to obtain accurate results regarding teachers’ assessment training needs, Vogt and Tsagari focused only on regular teachers. To some extent, the training needs of EFL teachers in the various areas of LTA identified in this study confirm Hasselgreen et al.’s findings. The results showed a general need for training in both surveys, and teachers, in particular, reported a need for basic or advanced training in almost all topics covered in the survey. For example, they reported that they received some training in “giving feedback”, preparing self/peer-assessments, and in various content areas, however, they asked for more training in these aspects. The results also confirmed that teachers had no training in some areas such as “preparing classroom tests” and “giving grads”. Thus, language assessment training for EFL instructors has been confirmed (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014).

Studies on Language Assessment Literacy in the Saudi Context

Limited research has been conducted in the Saudi EFL context on the different aspects of LAL (Hakim, 2015; Umer et al., 2018). Hakim (2015) conducted a quantitative study to investigate teachers’ awareness levels of various assessment tools and their perceptions of them. The results indicated that teachers had a clear knowledge of assessment tools, as they had participated in in-house and in-service workshops and training programs. However, it was discovered that novice teachers did not have a sufficient understanding of practical approaches to assessment, unlike experienced instructors who had a greater comprehension of LAL and successfully modified their assessment practices. It is reasonable to conclude that new language instructors, in particular, should be encouraged to improve their assessment literacy through training courses aimed at providing them with a clear and thorough understanding of sound assessment components, concepts, ideologies, and practices.
Additionally, Umer et al. (2018) explored how Saudi EFL teachers’ assessment practices aligned with recommended practices. The results revealed that most assessment tasks focused on lower order learning and that EFL teachers lacked knowledge of grading and preparing a comprehensive answer key. This study confirmed the gap between assessment theory (recommended, sound assessment principles) and teachers’ actual assessment practices, highlighting the need for professional training in assessment literacy.

Previous studies conducted in Saudi Arabia confirmed the importance of language assessment training for EFL instructors. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted to identify which aspects of LAL need to be improved based on teacher feedback. Therefore, this study intends to bridge the gap in the existing literature by answering the following research questions to gain a deeper understanding of LAL among Saudi EFL teachers:

1. What is the perceived level of LAL among Saudi in-service EFL teachers?
2. What aspects of LAL do in-service EFL teachers wish to improve through further professional training?

Methodology

Research Design and Instruments

In the field of education, descriptive research is used to investigate the what aspect of any phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, this study followed a descriptive study design and used a quantitative questionnaire that was administered to female EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire was adopted from Vogt and Tsagari (2014), which was originated by Hasselgreen et al. (2004). The questionnaire consists of three parts (see Appendix A). The first part includes respondents’ demographic data, such as age and level of education. The second part contains thirty items, thematically grouped as follows: (a) Language Testing and Assessment (LTA), (b) purpose of testing, and (c) content and concept of LTA. Each theme is divided into two sections: one for perceived assessment training and the other for assessment training needs. The third part includes four open-ended questions that aim to provide deeper insight into teachers’ assessment competencies and training needs. The three-point Likert scale in Vogt and Tsagari’s study (no/a little/more advanced) was used for the closed-ended questions and was slightly modified to (no/yes, basic training/yes, advanced training). This modification was made to overcome the shortcoming of the original questionnaire.

Participants

The population of this study was female Saudi EFL teachers who work at the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The sample was fifty female EFL teachers from the ELI who participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 25 to 50 years old. They were of different educational levels: BA (38.8%), MA (46.9%), and doctoral (14.3%). The participants were randomly chosen to volunteer for this study. Random sampling was used to minimize any subjective factors that could influence the study (Dörnyei, 2007).

Procedure and Method of Analysis

The data collection process took place from November 15 to November 30, 2021. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms. Before administering the questionnaire, a pilot
study was conducted with four teachers to ensure the clarity of the items. The teachers reported that the wording of the instructions for the three subscales was unclear, so amendments were made to address this confusion. The questionnaire was sent to ELI faculty members via email and WhatsApp. After collection, the data were organized using Excel and then passed through SPSS software for analysis. Descriptive statistics were run to explain the frequencies of the responses in the questionnaire, the mean, and the standard deviation.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues in data collection were taken into consideration. Approval was requested and granted by the ELI at King Abdulaziz University (see Appendix B). All teachers participated voluntarily. They were assured that their identities and responses would remain anonymous and that their data would only be used for research purposes.

**Results**

**Demographic Data**

In Table 1, frequency statistics show that the majority of participants (74%) had received training in language assessment. Moreover, among the fifty EFL instructors surveyed, the majority (24%) have master’s degrees, 19% have bachelor’s degrees, and 7% have doctoral degrees. The age of the participants ranged from 25 to 50. Responses with the highest percentage were from participants aged 30 to 40, whereas the responses with the lowest percentage were from those aged 40 to 50 (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receiving training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–30</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Closed Response Items**

The multi-item scales in the questionnaire were tested using Cronbach’s alpha to ensure their reliability (see Table 2). According to Dörnyei (2007), Cronbach’s alpha must be above .70. The reliability of the three scales was excellent: language testing and assessment training ($\alpha = .86$), training in purpose of language assessment ($\alpha = .80$), and training in concept and content of language assessment ($\alpha = .84$). Total reliability for the entire questionnaire was $\alpha = .91$ (see Table 2).
Comparing the means of the three scales of perceived training in the LAL section, the highest mean score was for the content and concept of language assessment scale M= 1.87; Table 3). This indicates that Saudi EFL teachers have knowledge of the items on the aforementioned scale. The lowest mean score was for the LTA scale M = 1.73, which means that Saudi EFL teachers have little knowledge of this area of testing and assessment (see Table 3).

Table 3. Saudi EFL Teachers’ Perceived Training in LAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language testing and assessment scale</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of testing scale</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and concepts of language assessment scale</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the training needs section, the highest mean was for the LTA scale M = 2.08, which indicates that Saudi EFL teachers need general training on LTA. The lowest mean score was for the purpose of testing scale M = 1.96, which shows that Saudi EFL teachers do not require much training on the purposes of testing (see Table 4).

Table 4. Saudi EFL Teachers’ Training Needs in LAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language testing and assessment scale</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of testing scale</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and concepts of language assessment scale</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Training in Language Testing and Assessment

On the LTA scale, the majority of participants had received training in “giving feedback to students based on information from assessments” M = 1.98. However, participants desired additional training on both the basic (14%) and advanced (22%) levels. “Preparing classroom tests” M = 1.84 and “using self- or peer assessment” M = 1.86 were the second most common areas in which participants had received training. However, additional training is needed in both areas, as the averages were M = 2.06 and M = 2.38, respectively. Few participants had received training in “giving feedback to students based on information from computer-based tests” M = 1.42. Therefore, over two-thirds of participants need basic and advanced training in this aspect of language assessment (see Table 5).
Training in the Purpose of Testing

On the purpose of testing scale, the majority of participants had received training in the areas of “giving grades” M = 2.04 and “finding out what needs to be taught/learned” M = 2.10. However, the least developed areas seemed to be “placing students into courses, programs, etc.” M = 1.38 and “awarding final certificates (from school/program; local, regional, or national level)” M = 1.46. For training needs, the participants reported a strong need for training in “placing students into courses, programs, etc.” M = 2.02 and “finding out what needs to be taught/learned” M = 2.02 (see Table 6).
Table 6. Respondents’ Perceptions of Training Received and Needed in Purposes of Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in purpose of testing</td>
<td>Giving grades</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26 Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding out what needs to be taught/learned</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>22 Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placing students into courses, programs, etc.</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>38 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22 Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awarding final certificates (from school/program; local, regional or national level)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36 Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32 Advanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Training in Concept and Content of Assessment

As mentioned above, participants received the greatest amount of training on the aspects of this scale compared to the previous two scales. Even though teachers seemed to be familiar with assessing traditionally tested linguistic skills, such as speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary, they still need training in testing and assessing productive M = 1.98 and micro-linguistic skills M = 1.96 (see Table 3). Testing and assessing integrated skills were areas in which participants needed the most training M = 2.02 (see Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents’ Perceptions of Training Received and Needed in Concept and Content of Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in concept and content of the assessment</td>
<td>Testing/assessing of receptive skills (reading/listening)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24 Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Testing/assessing of productive skills (speaking/writing)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>26 Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Testing/assessing of micro-linguistic aspects (grammar/vocabulary)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20 Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38 Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Testing/assessing of Integrated language skills</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22 Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40 Advanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open Response Items

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked the following four open-ended questions to gain deeper insights into their perceived level of LAL and their language assessment training needs.
Q1: During your pre-service training, what did you learn about language testing and assessment?

In this question, participants were asked about their pre-service assessment training. Approximately half of the participants (54%) stated that they did not receive any training prior to starting their jobs. The remaining 46% said that they had received some pre-service assessment training. Of this number, 22% mentioned that they had learned about different types of tests and assessments: “I learned about the type of assessment and when to use them depending on what we want to measure.” Another 12% of participants declared that they had learned about assessing language skills: “I learned the assessment of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and integration of two or more skills.” Few participants reported that they had received training on how to construct tests and follow rubrics when marking performance tests.

Q2: Have you received in-service training in language assessment? If yes, what was the focus of this training?

In this question, participants were asked whether they had received in-service assessment training. Approximately half of the participants (52%) admitted that they had not received any assessment training while working as EFL teachers. Thirty percent stated that they had taken part in in-service training on test types, formatively and summatively assessing receptive and productive skills, and purposes of testing. Ten percent indicated that they had been trained on marking students’ tests and using analytical scales for speaking and writing tests. One participant mentioned that she had received training on using technology in online assessments.

Q3: Have you received training in the use of technology in language assessment? If yes, what was the focus of this training?

This question examined whether participants had been trained in the use of technology in language assessment. The data showed that 78% of participants had not received training on integrating technology into language assessment. Twenty percent of participants stated that they had been trained in using the Blackboard platform to administer tests, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic: “Yes, how to make tests on Blackboard and other applications.” One participant reported that she had been trained on the automated coring method.

Q4: Which aspects of language assessment literacy (LAL) do you need to have training on and why?

In this question, participants were asked to identify the aspects of LAL on which they desired future training. There were five aspects of LAL from which participants could choose: purpose of testing, preparing and administering language tests, scoring and rating, giving feedback to students, and assessment policy and local practices. Participants could choose more than one response and were asked to justify their choices. These aspects of LAL were proposed by Kremmel and Harding (2020). Table 8 below shows that the majority of participants chose to have training on preparing and administering language tests and giving feedback to students (54% and 52%, respectively). Forty-eight percent of participants chose to have training on scoring and rating, while thirty-eight percent wanted further training on assessment policy and local practices. Surprisingly, the least frequently chosen aspect was purpose of testing; only 26% wished to receive training on it.
Table 8. Language Assessment Training Needs for EFL Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAL Aspects</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of testing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>T1 “To be able to prepare for language tests and be aware of its purpose.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T2 “I have little knowledge on the testing purposes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T3 “Because most of the teachers write the test just because it is part of their job and do not pay attention to the purpose of test.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing and administering language tests</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>T1 “I still need to be familiar with how to prepare tests which suit different capabilities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T2 “Because as a teacher, I have not been trained on how to make tests. Even though I work in a place that doesn’t involve classroom teachers in constructing the tests, but I need this knowledge for my professional development.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T3 “To improve my skills in terms of preparing valid and reliable tests.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring and rating</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>T1 “I don’t know how to correct students’ essays.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T2 “I chose scoring because that differs from campus to another.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T3 “To be more specific in scoring and not just deducting grades.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving feedback to students on their tests</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>T1 “Because I believe that feedback is the most important aspect to help students move forward toward their goal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T2 “I need to know more about them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T3 “I believe it is what I need.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment policy and local practices</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>T1 “Because teaching at different institutions would confuse the teacher on how to assess his/her students since different institutions have different goals and visions.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The Level of LAL Perceived by Saudi In-Service EFL Teachers

In this quantitative study, the findings showed that on the training in LTA scale, teachers were well trained in giving feedback to students based on information gleaned from assessments. This finding aligns with Vogt and Tsagari (2014), who found that most EFL teachers from different European countries had received either basic or advanced training in this area. It can be noted that giving feedback is a critical skill, as many aspects of teaching and learning can be developed based on this feedback. For example, feedback gives teachers, students, and test developers insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the course as a whole and the assessments in particular.

On the same scale, teachers showed a high level of training in “preparing classroom tests.” This finding is consistent with that of Hasselgreen et al. (2004), who also found that teachers had adequate knowledge in this area. Additionally, teachers in this study received a high level of training in “using self- or peer assessment.” This finding is in contrast to that of Hasselgreen et al., who found that teachers lack knowledge in this same area. This may be due to the differences between samples of the two studies, as Hasselgreen et al. focused on experts and teacher trainers who may not be as familiar with classroom-based tests as regular teachers. An unexpected result in the current study was that teachers lacked knowledge of giving feedback based on information collected from computer-based tests. Technology has become essential in different aspects of
language teaching; its use is not optional. Thus, teachers reported a significant need for training in this area.

On the training for the purpose of testing scale, the results indicated that Saudi EFL teachers were knowledgeable in the areas of “giving grades” and “finding out what needs to be taught/learned.” These results are similar to those of Vogt and Tsagari (2014), who reported that teachers had received no training in “giving grades” and that they desired more training in this aspect. It also supported Umer et al. (2018) claim that Saudi teachers lacked grading knowledge. An interesting result was the selection of “placing students into courses, programs, and awarding final certificates” as the area where EFL teachers felt they had received the least amount of training in language assessment. Since purposes of assessment are primarily the domain of administrators rather than regular teachers, it is understandable that Saudi EFL teachers lack knowledge in this area.

The last scale focused on training in concept and content of the assessments. The findings showed that teachers were familiar with assessing language skills (writing, speaking, and reading) and micro-linguistic skills (grammar and vocabulary). However, they reported a significant need for more basic and advanced training in these areas. These results are in line with previous studies by Hasselgreen et al. (2004) and Lan and Fan (2019), who found that teachers wished to improve their abilities in assessing traditional language skills.

The open-ended questions revealed that Saudi EFL teachers had received pre-service training in “preparing different types of assessments in testing/assessing different language skills.” Similarly, Hakim (2015) found that Saudi EFL teachers were knowledgeable about different types of assessments. Moreover, teachers participating in in-service training received more in-depth instruction about specific assessment types, such as formative and summative. The most noteworthy result was that teachers lacked significant knowledge of “using technology in online assessment.” For example, few teachers reported receiving training on using the Blackboard platform to administer tests to their students. Covid-19 has transformed education from a traditional to an online learning environment; therefore, the use of online assessments has become a necessity that every teacher should be trained on.

The Aspects of LAL That Teachers Wished to Improve Through Further Professional Training

Teachers in the study reported a stronger need for future training on aspects of the LTA subscale compared to the other two subscales. For example, teachers perceived “using self- or peer assessment” as their greatest training need. This result corresponds with that of Vogt and Tsagari (2014), who also found that most teachers desire training in using self- or peer assessment. This can be attributed to the fact that participants viewed this type of assessment as a new field of LTA. Teachers identified “preparing classroom tests” as the second area in which they need further training. This finding supports that of Umer et al. (2018), who found a lack of test preparation knowledge among Saudi EFL teachers; thus, they recommended further training in this area. On the same subscale, teachers did not wish to receive training in “using ready-made tests,” which aligns with the findings of both Hasselgreen et al. (2004) and Vogt and Tsagari. Their studies
showed that “using ready-made tests” was teachers’ least desired area of training. This may be due to teachers’ tendency to rely on the ready-made tests found in the textbook.

On the purpose of testing scale, teachers expressed an urgent need for training in “finding out what needs to be taught/learned.” This is in contrast with Vogt and Tsagari (2014), who found that teachers desired more training in “awarding certificates.” Surprisingly, it appears that “giving grades” is not important to Saudi EFL teachers, as they did not wish to receive training in this area. This finding is consistent with those of Hasselgreen et al. (2004) and Vogt and Tsagari, who also discovered that the majority of teachers did not wish to receive training in this area. Additionally, the answers to the open-response items supported that the majority of teachers did not wish to receive training on the “purpose of testing.”

Regarding the content and concept of the language assessment scale, teachers reported a strong need for training in “testing/assessing integrated language skills.” This finding agrees with that of Vogt and Tsagari (2014), who found that assessing integrated skills was the most desired area for training. This may be because assessing more than one skill is harder than assessing one skill. However, teachers did not wish to receive future training in assessing receptive skills.

Implications

The current study revealed that Saudi EFL teachers take their role in language assessment seriously and are willing to participate in additional training programs to develop their assessment literacy, with varying priorities depending on the context. Therefore, in this section, suggestions and implications are presented to assist EFL teachers in this area. First, teachers repeatedly noted that they have not yet achieved the required level of assessment literacy. Based on this finding, the present study suggests providing professional development opportunities for EFL teachers to meet their assessment needs. This could take the form of regular workshops that would contribute to the development of LAL. Second, teachers and decision makers should work collaboratively to develop assessment training programs (Stiggins, 1999). Third, formal language assessment courses at the BA and MA levels can help teachers reach the required level of competence in LAL. However, such courses should consider the instructors’ prior experience and practices as well as the findings of LAL needs analyses like the ones described in this study. Finally, since the EFL teachers in this study have not been trained on integrating technology into their assessment practices, future assessment training programs should incorporate the use of technology.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Further Recommendations

To conclude, this study set out to investigate Saudi EFL teachers’ assessment literacy levels and language assessment training needs. The study consisted of a quantitative questionnaire that was administered to female EFL teachers in the Saudi context. Regarding the first research question, it can be said that Saudi EFL teachers lack a well-developed knowledge of assessment literacy. Questionnaire results showed that the majority of participants received either no training or basic training in LAL. For the second research question, the findings showed that there is a need for training with priority being given to different content areas of LTA.

Despite these research findings, some limitations must be taken into account. This study was limited to female EFL instructors at King Abdulaziz University because it was difficult to
access male participants’ data. Additionally, the use of the questionnaire yielded only a partial picture of training levels and needs in LTA. Therefore, the use of varied instruments, such as interviews, would provide a more comprehensive view of teachers’ assessment literacy. Another limitation is that the sample size was not large enough to generalize the findings to other populations.

Further research on LAL in the Saudi context is recommended, as few studies have been conducted on this topic. Additional areas of assessment literacy should be explored using other samples, such as male teachers with different educational levels. Another suggestion is to study the effects of previous training on the current assessment practices of EFL teachers. Finally, in order to obtain comprehensive results, using mixed methods, such as interviews, together with the questionnaire is highly encouraged.

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References


**Appendices**

**Appendix A (Ethical Approval Form)**
2.5 Briefly describe the aims of this research study. Any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases should be explained. Please use no more than 300 words.

This study aims to investigate the in-service EFL teachers’ current levels of classroom-based language assessment literacy (CBLAL). Moreover, it aims to investigate the knowledge and aspects of CBLAL that they wish to improve.

2.6 Please provide an outline of the proposed research methods and procedure. Please use no more than 300 words.

To collect the data, online survey will be adopted and modified based on the purposes of the present research study. SPSS Version 23 will be applied to analyze the data.

3. Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1 Who are the participants?</th>
<th>Female EFL instructor in the ELI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Number of participants required with justification.</td>
<td>The minimum is 50 participants. The justification is that we plan to publish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 How will they be recruited?</td>
<td>Random sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 What is the inclusion/exclusion criteria?</td>
<td>Participants must be in-service instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Are there any possible risks that participants may experience while participating in the research?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Explain whether participants will be provided with any financial incentive or other “reward” that will be used during the research</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B (The Questionnaire)

Part one: Background information
1. Age
   - 25 to 30
   - 30 to 40
   - 40 to 50
   - 50-60
2. Educational level
   - Bachelor
   - Master
   - Doctoral
3- During your pre-service or in-service training, have you learned something about testing and assessment (theory and practice)
   - Yes
   - No

Please specify if you received or need training in the following domains based on the three choices (No, yes, basic training, yes advanced training). Each domain was divided into two aspects the first one for the received training and the second for the needed training.

Part two: questions about training in language testing and assessment (LTA)
1. Preparing classroom tests
Part three: questions about training in Purposes of testing

1. Giving grades
2. Finding out what needs to be taught/learned
3. Placing students into courses, programs, etc.
4. Awarding final certificates (from school/program; local, regional or national level)

Part four: questions about training in Content and Concept of Language Testing and Assessment

1. Testing/assessing of receptive skills (reading/listening)
2. Testing/assessing of productive skills (speaking/writing)
3. Testing/assessing of micro-linguistic aspects (grammar/vocabulary)
4. Testing/assessing of integrated language skills

Part Five: Questions to explore teachers' perceptions of their language testing and assessment competencies and training.

1. During your pre-service training, what did you learn about language testing and assessment?

2. Have you received in-service training in Language Assessment and Testing? If yes, what was the focus of this training?

3. Have you received training to use technology in language assessment and testing? If yes, what was the focus of this training?

4. Which aspects of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) do you need to have training on and why?
   a) Purpose of testing
   b) Preparing and administering language tests
   c) Scoring and rating
   d) Giving feedback to students based on the information from tests
   e) Assessment policy and local practices.
Usage of Grammatical Cohesive Devices in Paragraph Writing among Foundation-Year Medical Students at a University in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract
Before entering a medical college, Saudi pre-medical freshmen study a Foundation-Year English language course for their English language enhancement. Writing is one of the language skills taught in English language courses at the Foundation-Year level. This study investigates Foundation-Year medical students' difficulties using cohesive grammatical devices for paragraph writing. The study attaches considerable significance to exploring the pre-medical freshmen's problems using cohesive grammatical devices while writing paragraphs in English. The sample of sixty-seven student-written paragraphs was chosen randomly from the Foundation-Year medical students. The paragraphs were analyzed to determine students' difficulties using cohesive grammatical devices. A qualitative research approach was carried out, and Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) framework was adopted for analyzing cohesive devices, i.e., reference, conjunction, ellipsis, and substitution. The findings showed that Saudi pre-medical students at the Foundation-Year level could not use cohesive grammatical devices effectively. The study recommended a need to introduce an appropriate writing skill module in the Foundation-Year English courses and improve the teaching strategies to overcome the students’ deficiencies in writing paragraphs.

Keywords: Coherence, Cohesion, Cohesive devices, Conjunction, References, Ellipsis, Substitution, paragraph writing

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Introduction

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), the notion of ‘cohesion’ is associated with the meaning or interpretation conveyed in a text. A perception of cohesion is developed when the meaning of some elements in the verbal expression in speech or writing depends on that of another. Halliday and Hasan’s interpretation of ‘cohesion’ is referred to here with the term ‘cohesive ties’ in which linguistic elements are tied together to depend on each other to convey a whole meaning of discourse. The concept of tying elements together gives a sense of purpose, makes it possible to analyze any text in terms of its cohesive features, and allows a reader to understand its patterns and style. Halliday and Hasan (1976) and other experts classify cohesive ties into grammatical and lexical cohesion. Understanding these cohesive devices for students of English as a second or foreign language help 'decoding' the meaning of discourse.

Salkie (1995) stated that cohesion in a paragraph works as a glue to unite the parts of sentences. The correct placement of different parts of linguistic features, known as cohesive devices, can create cohesion in paragraph writing. The cohesive devices such as reference (exophora, endophora), substitution, ellipsis, connectives (additive, adversative, causal & temporal), and lexical cohesion (synonyms, antonyms, repetition & subordinates) can make a paragraph effectively meaningful and easily understandable, which is known as coherence. Several researchers, such as Gersbacher, Varner, and Faust (1990), described that correctly using cohesive devices causes increased cohesion in making a paragraph coherent or comprehensible.

Writing is a time-consuming and challenging activity, especially for L2 learners. There are many reasons for Saudi students' poor writing, such as transfer from L1 to L2, social constraints in which they do not find an appropriate environment to use written English outside of their classroom, and an education system in which learning the English language is not given much importance. Nunan (1999) explains that composing a coherent piece of writing is a great challenge, particularly in learning a second language.

The writing skill embeds many other writing-related skills like grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Students need to achieve appropriate competency to be proficient in writing. Moreover, considerable practice is required to gain skilfulness in writing. Van Schalkwyk and van der Walt (2009) reveal demotivation of the students' preparedness at various levels. They both argued that students faced great difficulty in writing, including the correct use of grammar, spelling, coherence, and cohesion in writing a paragraph.

Ahmed (2010) argues by referring to Zheng’s (1999) study that EFL teachers and learners experience specific difficulties in teaching and learning the skill of writing because many teachers of English have realized that acquiring the writing skill seems to be more laborious and demanding than developing the other language skills.

Considering the importance of cohesive grammatical ties for paragraph writing and embedded difficulties faced by Saudi pre-medical students at the foundation level, this study aims to investigate students' problems in using cohesive grammatical devices for paragraph writing.
This study investigates the Saudi Foundation-Year medical students' actual level of using cohesive grammatical devices in their paragraph writing. The cohesion and coherence of writing a paragraph, in terms of using 'reference,' conjunction, ellipsis, and substitution, will be analyzed in this study. Consequently, the study will recommend adopting necessary measures for further improvement in the Foundation year medical students' paragraph writing.

Writing is complex, and writing with cohesion and coherence is increasingly difficult. It helps instructors understand students' level of language learning because writing requires a combination of many sub-skills, true skillfulness in the writing system of any language, needs to master grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, pre-writing, writing the first draft, editing, and writing the final draft. Despite these skills, effective writing requires the skillfulness of the elements of cohesion and coherence.

For academic purposes, students need to write paragraphs in their writing exams. Therefore, they need to demonstrate writing proficiency. Compelling writing demands various kinds of skills to develop coherent paragraphs. In professional & academic requirements, scripts with cohesiveness get immense significance in all kinds of examinations. Ahmed (2010) explains that despite the various approaches to the teaching of writing, EFL writing is still a crucial area for teachers and students.

Due to the significance of coherent writing skills, several studies in the Saudi context have been conducted to investigate students' English writing problems and errors. However, this study focuses on exploring the Saudi pre-medical students' use of cohesive grammatical devices in writing paragraphs in English at the foundation level. The study will help to make recommendations to adapt effective teaching methods and design appropriate curricula for further improvement in the writing of coherent paragraphs.

There are three main objectives of the study.
1. To determine the grammatical devices Saudi pre-medical students use in their written paragraphs.
2. To determine the frequency of grammatical devices used correctly or incorrectly in the students’ written paragraphs.
3. To find the primary problems faced by the students in writing cohesive paragraphs.

1. What types of cohesive grammatical devices are used by Saudi pre-medical students in their written discourse?
2. How frequently do the Saudi pre-medical students use cohesive grammatical devices correctly or incorrectly in their writing paragraphs?
3. What problems do the Saudi pre-medical students face in producing cohesive paragraphs?

**Literature Review**

Hogue (2008) defined a paragraph as a collection of relevant sentences about a single topic. There should be one topic or idea in each paragraph; however, the size of a paragraph varies from
one writer to another. The paragraphs divide a written text into appropriate parts or chunks to maintain the reader’s interest in the content. Cook, Firestone, and Betts (2021) reported that the origin of the word ‘paragraph’ came from the Latin word ‘paragraphos,’ which means a ‘break in sense’. The term graph denotes 'writing' in the Latin language. Following are the parts and kinds of paragraphs with a brief description.

The first part of a paragraph is a topic sentence and serves as a preview of a forthcoming section. It indicates the theme of the paragraph. It attracts the readers’ attention by persuading them to read the text. The second part of a paragraph provides descriptive detail to support the topic sentence. It is the essential part of a paragraph and contains precise information about the topic. The third part of a paragraph wraps up or ties back to the topic sentence. The concluding sentence serves as a reiteration of the topic or wraps up the paragraph with a more general theme.

Savege and Shafiei (2007) classified paragraphs into five categories: descriptive, example, process, opinion, and narrative. A descriptive paragraph conveys the message about an imaginary description. It prepares the reader to understand a textual detail related to the five human senses vision, smell, touch, feel and taste. The writer creates a picture of a person, place, or thing with words to captivate and engage the reader with the specific description given in a text.

An example or illustrative paragraph attracts readers for its engaging examples to explain a point. The paragraph begins with a topic sentence and is followed by an example to increase interest and vividness in the text. The transition words such as ‘for example’ or ‘for instance’ are commonly used in the paragraph. Mostly the illustrative style of writing gives narrative strength to a reader.

A process paragraph describes how to do something step by step to perform a process or task.

An opinion paragraph is a paragraph in which the writer gives their opinion to persuade the reader. The views expressed in the paragraph are supported with facts or reasons to make the reader agree with them. The expressions such as 'I believe,' ‘I think that,' or 'according to me’ are usually used in the text to express the writer’s opinion.

In a narrative paragraph, a story is narrated with its relevant introduction, giving necessary detail and a conclusion. The narrative paragraph is written according to the needs and interests of a particular audience. The transition words such as 'first,' 'later,' or 'then'. give the reader a hint about how the event progressed.

Rehman (2013) stated that cohesion is an essential feature of a compelling piece of writing and connecting sentences together creates coherence in writing. The organization of the ideas into a unified whole enables readers to understand a text. Rehman (2013) referred to Cox, Shahnahan, and Sulzby's (1990) argument that cohesion helps a reader construct meaning from a textbook. Halliday and Hasan (1976) state that cohesion refers to the sense that is formed or achieved within a text. Cohesion is achieved when the interpretation of some elements in a text depends on each other. This dependency on the correct use of cohesive devices makes a text effectively interconnected and enhances the meaning of an overall discourse.
The pronouns and reference words are essential in a written and verbal discourse. They are used to describe something which has already been referred to. e.g., they, them, he, which, this/these, that/those. These words indicate connections or relations among the sentences and enhance the interpretation and clarity of discourse. The linking words and phrases are used to make lists, show the order in a process, give examples, generalize, show a result or consequence, summarise, and express an alternative. The essential linking words and phrases with their functions are given below.

Table 1. Linking words and phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Linking Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enumeration</td>
<td>To make a list</td>
<td>first of all, first, firstly, secondly, second, thirdly, third, finally, last, next, last but not least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>To add</td>
<td>moreover furthermore, additionally, additionally, as well, what is more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>To summarize</td>
<td>to sum up, to summarize, summarise, in summary, overall, inconclusion, to conclude, all in all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>To give an example</td>
<td>for instance, example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result/ inference</td>
<td>To show consequence</td>
<td>thus, therefore, consequently, hence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>To show contrast</td>
<td>however, on the one hand on the other hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concession</td>
<td>To show concession</td>
<td>besides, though, nevertheless, nonetheless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>To show transition</td>
<td>Meanwhile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Almutairi (2017) described that when a word or a phrase is substituted for another in writing, it is called ‘Substitution’. It can be nominal substitution such as ‘same,’ ‘one,’ and ‘ones,’ verbal substitution like ‘do,’ and a clausal substitution ‘not,’ ‘so’. An example of nominal substitution is: Which cupcake do you like? I’d like the chocolate one, please. ‘One’ takes the place of the noun ‘cupcake’. An example of verbal substitution is like ‘Jane plays tennis. All her family does. The word ‘does’ replaces the verb ‘plays’. The example of clausal substitution is: Has everyone eaten already? I hope not. The single item ‘not’ takes the place of the entire clause (everybody has eaten already). Another example of substitution is ‘the graph on the left shows average calorie intake by age, while the one on the right shows the daily exercise levels. The word one can be used to avoid repetition of the word graph. If we have a plural noun, we need the word ones, e.g., the wealthiest countries compared to the poorest ones.

The ellipsis means omitting words, assuming that the meaning will be understood even after leaving them out.
Usage of Grammatical Cohesive Devices in Paragraph Writing

Abdul Qadeer & T’chiang

E.g., I’ve finished the essay, but not the report is the same as I’ve spent the essay, but I have not finished the report.

The words ‘I have and ‘finished’ have been left out as inferred from the first sentence.

Savage and Shafeil (2006) stated that defining a paragraph combines many sentences about a topic. Coherence in writing is required when the cohesive devices are presented in a clear, logical, and understandable order. Many researchers have discussed coherence and cohesion in their studies to trace the difficulties the ESL/EFL students experience while writing their paragraphs or essays.

Effective use of cohesive devices creates coherence in a paragraph. Enkvist (1990) states that coherence is achieved when syntax, semantics, and pragmatics follow an order. Many researchers like Witte and Faigley (1981); Connor (1984); Ferris (1994); Jin (2000); Reynolds (2001); Normant (2002); Ahmed (2010) explained precisely that paragraph coherence could depend on successfully placed cohesive devices, correlating with cohesion, and writing proficiency. Rehman (2013) explains that the incorrect and overuse of cohesive devices is the cause of incomprehensive and redundancy.

Many studies have investigated Saudi students' use of cohesive devices in writing. AL-Jarf (2001) surveyed to determine the characteristics of cohesive devices by the EFL students from King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. The findings explore that substitution was the most challenging form of cohesion, followed by reference and ellipsis by Saudi EFL students. The results have indicated that deficiency in the use of cohesion is, in fact, due to the students' substandard linguistic competence and lack of knowledge about cohesion rules.

Barzanji (2016) referred to the study of Rehman (2011), which confirmed that English is taught as a compulsory subject in Saudi Arabia. However, in some universities and schools, English has become the primary language of instruction, especially for science and technology. Also, achieving remarkable proficiency has become an essential requirement and qualification to get jobs in Saudi Arabia. However, despite all the needs, Rehman (2011) claimed that Saudi undergraduate students fail to acquire English proficiency. Consequently, developing writing skills in English poses significant challenges for many Saudi students. According to AL-Jarf (2001), teaching writing skill is one of the most challenging tasks for language teachers and learners in Saudi Arabia.

Alda (2016) argued that when Arab EFL learners compose a paragraph, they write their sentences disorderly and confuse meaning. The outcome showed the learners’ inefficiency in using correct language and the basic mechanics of writing. Moreover, the learners are unaware of a model of standard written English. Khalil (1989) investigated the usage of cohesive devices in the essay writing of Arab college students. The findings showed that students’ writing was incoherent due to insufficient information related to the topic. The students overused lexical devices (reiteration) of the cohesive devices and underused other lexical and cohesive grammatical devices.

Masadeh (2019) claimed that Saudi undergraduate students' written paragraphs were not developed in cohesion and coherence. The problematic central area experienced by the students...
was the low ability to use synonymous words or phrases. They use inaccurate conjunctions and transition words to connect sentences and paragraphs to convey a coherent relationship of wholeness. The study also discovered that the students' unawareness to split their sections in content relevance hindered them from producing coherent paragraphs.

From the brief literature review, it can be concluded that many researchers have concentrated on the presence or absence of cohesion devices in written discourse. However, none has investigated the foundation year pre-medical students’ skills in cohesive grammatical devices used in writing paragraphs. Halliday and Hassan’s (1976) framework of cohesive devices is divided into different types such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. This study has used this framework (excluding cohesive lexical devices) to describe the coherent devices used by the Saudi pre-medical students to know their skills about grammatical devices used to make their paragraphs cohesive and understandable to the readers.

Methodology

The study carries qualitative features of methodology as Denzin & Lincoln (2000) claim that in qualitative research, things are seen in their natural setting, and it is attempted to make sense of phenomena in terms of the interpretation or to mean people bring to them. It investigates writing deficiencies related to cohesion and coherence of pre-medical students studying at the foundation level. The cohesion and coherence of written paragraphs will be analyzed with an emphasis on conjunction/connectives, reference, ellipsis, and substitution for the natural coherence of written paragraphs.

Participants

The participants of this study are the foundation year medical students at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia, who studied English in an intensive program at the foundation year level. A sample of sixty-seven students’ written paragraphs was taken randomly from the students enrolled in the 2nd semester of the academic year 2022. It was assumed that the participant students put their maximum effort into achieving good marks and that their written paragraphs could represent their fundamental writing skills and knowledge. All students had similar educational backgrounds, qualifications, and socio-economic statuses.

Research Instruments

The instrument used by the researcher to collect the data was students’ written paragraphs. The paragraph topics remained unannounced before conducting the exam. However, the students were taught how to write paragraphs during class lectures. The student's written paragraphs were collected after an exam because it was pre-assumed that the students mostly put their maximum level of effort to achieve good marks in their exams. It is considered that if the students were asked to write paragraphs only for the sake of research, they might not have taken it seriously. So, it can be believed that the students' sample of written paragraphs is an accurate representation of their writing skills. Sixty-seven students' written paragraphs were chosen to collect data on cohesive grammatical devices, e.g., conjunction/connectives, reference, ellipsis, and substitution. Halliday and Hassan's (1976) framework helped to investigate the elements of cohesive devices in the students' written paragraphs.
Data Analysis

Corder's (1974) steps for content analysis were brought into use for analyzing cohesive grammatical devices in students' written paragraphs. Accordingly, first, every word in a sentence of a written paragraph was examined precisely to determine the correct or incorrect use of cohesive grammatical devices. The number of cohesive grammatical devices used in the written paragraphs was counted and classified into different categories. After the categorization of students' used grammatical cohesive devices, a comparison was made to find the frequency of cohesive devices used correctly or incorrectly by the students. The findings have been given in the table below, and for further elaboration, the data has been interpreted via charts.

Findings

The following outcome is worth considering for the discussion and conclusion after analyzing the written paragraphs of the participants.

Table 1. Foundation year medical students’ use of conjunctions; additives in the written paragraphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunctions/Additives</th>
<th>Frequency of correctly used</th>
<th>Frequency of incorrectly used</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreover</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>For instance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likewise</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In addition</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beside</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatively</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I mean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarly</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the same way</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the other hand</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By contrast</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Such as</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In other words</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data analysis revealed that 89.28% of the cohesive grammatical devices were used correctly, while 10.71% were used incorrectly.
The foundation year medical students’ skill of using adversative conjunctions in paragraph writing is given in table 2.

Table 2. Foundation year medical students’ use of conjunctions; adversatives in the written paragraphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunctions (Adversative)</th>
<th>Frequency of correctly used</th>
<th>Frequency of incorrectly used</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Yet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 In fact</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 However</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 But</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Though</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Instead</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14 =100%</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The foundation year medical students’ skill of using casual conjunctions in paragraph writing is given in table 3.

Table 3. *Foundation year medical students’ use of conjunctions; casual in the written paragraphs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunctions (Causal)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hence</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>35 =100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>00.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3. Conjunctions; casual**

The foundation year medical students’ skill of using temporal conjunctions in paragraph writing is given in table 4.
Table 4. Foundation year medical students’ use of conjunctions; temporal in the written paragraphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunctions (temporal)</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Then</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Finally</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In conclusion</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Next</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>After that</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>=100%</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Conjunctions; temporal

The foundation year medical students’ skill of using personal reference in paragraph writing is given in table 5.

Table 5. Foundation year medical students’ use of reference; personal in the written paragraphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference (Personal)</th>
<th>Frequency of correctly used</th>
<th>Frequency of incorrectly used</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Me/my</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>He</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>His / him</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>She</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Her</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>They</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Usage of Grammatical Cohesive Devices in Paragraph Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Them</th>
<th>Their</th>
<th>You / your</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>Us</th>
<th>Our</th>
<th>It / its</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1343 =99.04%</strong></td>
<td><strong>13 =0.95%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1356</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The foundation year medical students’ skill of using comparative reference in paragraph writing is given in table 7.

Table 7. Foundation year medical students’ use of reference; comparative in the written paragraphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference (Comparative)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>57=98.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Reference; demonstrative

Figure 7. Reference; comparative
The foundation year medical students’ skill of using substitution in paragraph writing is given in table 8.

Table 8. *Foundation year medical students’ use of substitution in the written paragraphs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency of correctly used</th>
<th>Frequency of incorrectly used</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Nominal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Verbal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Clausal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
<td>00.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The foundation year medical students’ skill of using an ellipsis in paragraph writing is given in table 9.

Table 9. *Foundation year medical students’ use of ellipsis in the written paragraphs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency of correctly used</th>
<th>Frequency of incorrectly used</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANominal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Verbal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Clausal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7 =100%</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
<td>00.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8. Ellipsis
After analyzing the foundation year medical students' written paragraphs, the study's findings have highlighted many aspects worth considering. Regarding the use of additive conjunctions, the students have shown their familiarity with additives such as 'And', 'Also', 'That is', and 'Then'. However, the students did not use other additives like 'Moreover', 'Furthermore', 'For instance', 'Likewise', 'In addition', 'Besides', 'Alternatively', 'I mean', 'Similarly', 'In the same way', 'On the other hand', 'By contrast', 'Or', 'Such as', and 'In other words'. The students demonstrated familiarity with the adversative conjunctions such as 'in fact', 'However', 'But', and 'Yet', but did not bring 'Though' and 'Instead' in their use for writing paragraphs.

Similarly, the foundation year medical students used casual conjunctions such as 'so', 'because', and 'then', showing their learning to use them. As for the casual conjunctions, i.e., 'therefore', 'as a result', and 'hence', the students did not use them at all, indicating their unfamiliarity. Likewise, the students used 'temporal conjunctions such as 'first', 'then', 'finally', 'next', and 'after that' but did not use 'Second', 'Third', 'In the conclusion', demonstrating the students' superficial level of learning. For the purpose of personal references, the foundation year medical students showed their familiarity with 'I', 'Me/any', 'He', 'Has/Have', 'She', 'Her', 'They', 'Them', 'You/Your', 'Us', 'Our', 'It is. However, they did not use 'Their' and 'We'. The foundation year medical students did not use demonstrative reference, 'which', but showed their familiarity with 'The', 'This', 'These', 'Those', and 'There'.

For the comparative references, the foundation year medical students revealed their learning to use 'So', 'Much', 'More', and 'Like', but did not use 'As', 'Less', and 'Better.' The foundation year medical students did not use substitution in their written paragraphs which ultimately indicates that they do not know using substitution in writing paragraphs. For the 'ellipsis,' the foundation year medical students used only the 'nominal' and 'verbal' ellipsis but did not use the 'clausal' ellipsis.

The study focused on finding the findings of the following questions.

**Research Question 1 (RQ.1)**

In response to the first question of the study, 'What types of cohesive grammatical devices are used by the Saudi foundation year medical students in their written discourse?' the acquired empirical data revealed that the foundation year medical students used 'and', 'also', 'that is' and 'then' as additive conjunctions. The students used 'yet', 'in fact', 'however', and 'but' as adversative conjunctions. During the foundation year, medical students used 'so', 'because', and 'then' as casual conjunctions. For temporal conjunctions the students used 'first', 'then', 'finally', 'next', and 'after that'.

The empirical data showed the foundation year medical students' familiarity to use personal references such as 'I', 'Me/any', 'he', 'his/him', 'she', 'her', 'they', 'them', 'you/your', 'us', 'our', 'it/its'. For demonstrative references, the empirical data revealed the students' awareness of the use of 'the', 'this', 'that', 'these', 'those', and 'there'.

For comparative references, 'so', 'much', and 'more' was used by the foundation year medical students showing their familiarity/knowledge only.

The empirical data indicated that the foundation year medical students did not use nominal, verbal, and clausal substitutions, highlighting that the students did not know how to use substitutions. However, the students used nominal & verbal ellipsis in their written paragraphs but did not use a clausal ellipsis.
Research Question 2 (RQ.2)

In response to the second question of the study, ‘*How frequently do the Saudi Pre-Clinical medical students use cohesive grammatical devices correctly or incorrectly in their writing paragraphs?*’, the obtained empirical data showed that the foundation year medical students used 89.28% additive conjunctions correctly and 10.71% incorrectly. However, the students used four additive conjunctions in their written paragraphs only. It showed that the students do not know/are familiar with using the maximum number of additive conjunctions.

In the foundation year, medical students’ usage of adversative conjunctions reached 100%, while incorrect usage remained at 0.0%. Similarly, the ratio of correctly used causal & temporal is 100%, and incorrect usage of both the conjunctions remained 0.0%.

Likewise, the correct usage of personal references is 99.05%, and incorrect usage is 0.95%. The participants’ correctly used demonstrative reference is 96.05%, and the incorrect usage is 3.94%. Similarly, the correctly used comparative reference by the participants is 98.27%, and the incorrectly used is 1.72%.

During the foundation year, medical students did not use substitution at all. Therefore, the ratio of percentage for both correctly & incorrectly used substitution is 0.0%. However, the correct usage of ellipsis is 100%, but the students did not use a clausal ellipsis at all, and the percentage of both correctly and incorrectly usage of ellipsis remained 0.0%.

Research Question 3 (RQ.3)

In response to the third question of the study, ‘*What problems do the Saudi pre-medical students face in producing cohesive paragraphs?*’ The acquired empirical data indicated that the foundation year medical students faced problems using all the cohesive devices. For instance, in additive conjunctions, the foundation year medical students did not use ‘Likewise,’ ‘In addition, ‘Besides,’ ‘Alternatively,’ ‘I mean, ‘Similarly,’ ‘In the same way, ‘On the other hand, ‘Such as, ‘In other words in the written paragraphs which consequently showed that the participants have no knowledge or familiarity with the usage of additive conjunctions.

Similarly, the foundation year medical students have not used adversatives such as ‘though’ and ‘instead’ at all, indicating the foundation year medical students’ deficiency in using all types of adversative conjunctions. For causal conjunctions, the foundation year medical students did not use ‘therefore, ‘as a result,’ and ‘hence’ in the written paragraphs revealing that the participants are unfamiliar with using all kinds of causal conjunctions. Likewise, the foundation year medical students did not use ‘second,’ ‘third,’ and ‘in conclusion’ as temporal conjunctions, which ultimately hints that the students have no familiarity or knowledge about them.

For personal reference, the foundation year medical students are comparatively better in using the personal reference, except the students did not use ‘their’ only. Likewise, for demonstrative reference, the foundation year medical students did not use ‘which’ at all, indicating the students’ lack of knowledge. Also, during the foundation year, medical students did not use ‘as,’ ‘less,’ and ‘better’ as the comparative reference, which helps infer that the students were unaware of their usage. The data showed that the foundation year medical students did not use ‘substitutes’ at all. However, for ellipsis, the students did not use a clausal ellipsis at all. In
summary, the cohesive devices the foundation year medical students did not use help infer that the students face problems in their usage.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that the Saudi pre-medical students at the foundation year level were experiencing difficulties in producing cohesive and coherent paragraphs. The findings of this study are in line with the studies conducted by Rehman (2011), ALdera (2016), Al Mutairi (2017), Othman (2019), Masadeh (2019), and Al Zubairy (2020) that Saudi EFL students could not show their skillfulness in using grammatical cohesive devices. However, they showed little familiarity with ‘references’ and ‘conjunctions’ just using a limited number such as ‘And’ ‘Also’ ‘That is’ and ‘Then’ as (Additive conjunctions), ‘yet’ ‘in fact’ ‘however’ and ‘but’ as (Adversative conjunction), ‘so’ ‘because’ and ‘then’ as (Causal conjunctions), & ‘first’ ‘then’ ‘finally’ ‘next’ and ‘after that’ as (Temporal conjunction). The students could not use other types of conjunctions at all.

Regarding the use of references, students have a reasonable awareness about using personal, demonstrative, and comparative references. Only very few references, such as 'their,' 'we’ (Personal reference), ‘which’ (Demonstrative reference), and ‘as’ ‘less’ & ‘better’ (Comparative references), could not be used at all.

The findings showed that students are the least familiar with using ellipsis and substitution to make their paragraphs cohesive and coherent. The results also showed that the correct use of cohesive grammatical devices dominates the percentage of incorrectly used grammatical cohesive devices.

The study's outcome revealed that the students face difficulties using all grammatical cohesive devices. The students can merely use specific grammatical devices, which ultimately does not make their written paragraphs coherent and compelling.

Limitations of the Study

The study focused on male pre-medical students’ writing paragraphs at a Saudi university's foundation year-level course. Considering social constraints in Saudi Arabia, the female students' written paragraphs were excluded from the scope of the study. The research sample carried 67 pre-medical students' written paragraphs only. However, a study with a large selection from other disciplines is also recommended in the future.

Conclusion

This study investigates foundation year medical students' difficulties using grammatical cohesive devices for paragraph writing. It is concluded that Saudi foundation year medical students struggle to produce coherent paragraphs. It has been evident through the empirical findings that the foundation year medical students' skills for using grammatical cohesive devices need to improve further. The conclusion aligns with Khalil's (1989) and Ahmed (2010) studies, in which investigations have been made to analyze EFL students' proficiencies in using cohesive devices.
The present study made it clear that the educational approaches have not helped the foundation year medical students improve their paragraph writing skills, so further studies must be conducted to enhance the students' learning of cohesive devices.

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