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The Efficacy of Completing Form-focused Tasks Collaboratively vs Individually: Utilizing Interventionist Dynamic Assessment to Quantify Learning Gains

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Abstract
Many language teachers employ collaborative learning within their classrooms. However, expectations surrounding the efficacy of working collaboratively need to be empirically verified. This study employed dynamic assessment to investigate whether learners who are situated within an undergraduate Qatari EFL context learn second language grammatical structures more effectively by working either collaboratively with their peers or individually. Interventionist dynamic assessment was used to quantify the extent of the learning gains made by male Arabic undergraduate EFL learners (N = 52) three times (pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest) over a 12-week period. In between the pretest and the posttest, six form-focused treatment tasks were administered. The experimental group (n = 20) completed the tasks collaboratively with their peers; a comparison group (n = 16) completed the tasks individually; and a control group (n = 16) did not complete the tasks. The target structures were the simple past passive and the present continuous passive. A Mood’s median test (Mood, 1954) found no statistically significant differences between the collaborative condition and the individual condition. Although measuring emergent abilities which are still in the process of developing provided a more complete picture of the efficacy of working collaboratively, the lack of a statistically significant difference between the performances of the experimental and comparison groups for both target structures suggests that working collaboratively is not statistically more effective in facilitating learners’ linguistic development than working individually.

Keywords: collaborative learning, focus on form, individual learning, interventionist dynamic assessment

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Introduction

Collaborative learning, a set of instructional practices in which students work together to help each other to learn academic content, has been advocated by second language acquisition (SLA) practitioners for decades (Long & Porter, 1985; Pica & Doughty, 1985). For the present study, collaborative learning is defined as “(...) a coordinated synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem” (Roschelle & Teasley, 1995, p. 70). An example of a collaborative task is a collaboratively completed dictogloss task (Wajnryb, 1990). Numerous studies have documented how working collaboratively provides L2 learners with cognitive spaces in which they can pool their linguistic and cognitive resources in order to adjust, refine, and develop their linguistic accuracy and communicative competence, as well as collaboratively perform at a level higher than that at which they could be expected to perform individually (e.g., Anton & DiCamilla, 1999; Donato, 1994; Fernández Dobao, 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2008; Storch, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Swain, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Participating in such collaborative spaces is then expected to result in more accurate language use in subsequent individual performance.

The term dynamic assessment describes a range of assessment approaches and uses that are rooted in Vygotskian sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) theorized that although different learners may perform at a similar level, their underlying ability may be vastly different. Focusing exclusively on abilities that have already developed at the time of testing reveals nothing about emergent abilities which are still in the process of developing. Therefore, the purpose of psychological assessment from a Vygotskian perspective is to promote as well as gain an understanding into abilities which have been fully internalized as well as abilities which are still in the process of developing (Poehner, 2008). This belief is reflected in the concept of dynamic assessment. During dynamic assessment, the assessor provides intentional support (i.e., mediation) when the learner encounters difficulties and documents the learner’s responsiveness. Analysing a learner’s responsiveness to this support can provide a more complete understanding of abilities that are not yet fully developed. As it is able to access emergent abilities, dynamic assessment appears to offer a more nuanced way of assessing a learner’s linguistic development than more traditional non-dynamic measures of assessment.

The present study seeks to investigate to what extent working collaboratively to complete form-focused tasks impacts on Qatari undergraduate learners’ longer-term performance of two complex grammatical structures, the simple past passive and the present continuous passive. The following research question was asked. To what extent does working collaboratively to complete form-focused tasks impact on Qatari undergraduate learners’ longer-term performance of two complex grammatical structures? Currently, no previous study has employed dynamic assessment to investigate the efficacy of collaboratively learning L2 form in the SLA classroom. A unique aspect of this study is its use of dynamic assessment to assess the impact that working collaboratively has on learner abilities which are not fully formed but are still in the process of developing. Thus, a more complete picture of the effectiveness of learning L2 form collaboratively may be obtained. First, the body of research which has previously investigated the efficacy of collaboratively learning L2 form is reviewed. Then, the principles and procedures of dynamic assessment are explained. Finally, the efficacy of learning L2 form collaboratively is investigated.
Literature Review

Learning L2 Form Collaboratively

Sociocultural theories of learning offer a rational for learning collaboratively. A sociocultural perspective assumes that during collaborative tasks learners get collective help and guided support as a result of interacting with each other (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In other words, learners are able to mutually support each other’s performance. How working collaboratively allows L2 learners to both provide and receive guided support can be explained through the concept of collaborative dialogue. Swain (2000) defines collaborative dialogue as “dialogue in which speakers engage jointly in problem solving and knowledge building” (p. 102). When learners jointly problem solve and knowledge build, they may overtly use language as a psychological cognitive tool in order to organize and mediate each other’s linguistic performance. Swain (2000) explains that collaborative dialogue is an enactment of mental processes. “Through speaking, thought is externalized. Externalized as an utterance, it becomes an object. As an object it can be scrutinized, questioned, reflected upon, disagreed with, changed, or disregarded” (Swain & Lapkin, 2002, p. 286). Working collaboratively allows learners to both provide and receive peer mediation, providing opportunities for all task participants to restructure and develop features of their linguistic knowledge and L2 production. However, expectations of the efficacy of working collaboratively need to be empirically verified.

To my knowledge, there has been no statistical meta-analysis of the collaborative learning of L2 form. However, Elabdail (2021) examined the claim that collaborative writing is beneficial for L2 learning by synthesising the results of 33 studies. Elabdail (2021) found that collaboratively written texts tended to be more accurate than individually written texts with a medium effect size. Elabdail (2021) suggests that her findings support the position that collaborative writing promotes accuracy as it enables learners to pool expertise and engage in collaborative scaffolding (Donato, 1994).

Several studies have investigated the efficacy of collaboratively learning L2 form (i.e., Adams, 2007; Adams, Nuevo, & Egi 2011; Eckerth, 2008; Kuiken & Vedder, 2002; Lapkin, Swain, & Smith, 2002; McNichol & Lee, 2011; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Reinders, 2009; Spielman-Davidson, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Teng, 2020). These studies have utilized a wide variety of designs, been implemented in a wide variety of contexts, and have findings which differ (see Scotland, 2021).

Although some of these studies found statistical significance within their results (Adams et al., 2011; Eckerth, 2008; McNicol & Lee, 2011; Spielman-Davidson, 2000; Teng, 2020), many studies contain results which are not statistically significant (Adams et al., 2011; Kuiken & Vedder, 2002; McNicol & Lee, 2011; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Reinders, 2009; Spielman-Davidson, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). The concurrent statistical significance and non-significance reported by some studies can be partly attributed to the implementation of complex designs (e.g., the use of more than one target structure, data collection instrumentation, and/or test type).

Two of the above studies are worth further exploration as, similar to the present study, they determined the effectiveness of learning L2 form collaboratively by measuring changes in learners’ knowledge of the passive voice. Firstly, Kuiken and Vedder (2002) investigated the
effect of interaction between learners during a dictogloss task and the acquisition of three different classifications of the passive form. The structures targeted were verbal constructions with one auxiliary (e.g., *was owned*), two auxiliaries (e.g., *had been stolen*), and three auxiliaries (e.g., *may have been presented*). 16-18-year-old Dutch high school students completed two dictogloss tasks, either individually (n = 14) or in groups of three or four (n = 20). An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) found no statistically significant differences between the results of the two groups. Kuiken and Vedder (2002) concluded that “these findings do not support the hypothesis that giving learners the opportunity to interact with each other during a dictogloss task will result in a better score on the post-test or on the delayed post-test” (p. 349).

Secondly, Eckerth (2008) explored the extent to which working collaboratively resulted in the learning of the passive voice, reflexive prepositional verbs, and transitive prepositional verbs. Eckerth (2008) did not specify which passive constructions were targeted. 14 adult lower intermediate and 17 upper intermediate learners of German (N = 31) completed five treatment/test cycles. In each cycle, learners collaboratively completed either a dictogloss task or a text-repair task. A repeated measures two-factorial ANOVA found a statistically significant difference with a large effect size between the results of the pretests and posttests, and the results of the pretests and delayed posttests. Eckerth (2008) concluded that “learners are able to provide each other with feedback rich in acquisitional potential” (p. 133).

Overall, the results of previous studies suggest that collaboratively completing form-focused tasks can, but does not always, result in statistically significant gains in the learning of L2 form. However, all of these studies used non-dynamic testing techniques.

**Dynamic Assessment**

Dynamic assessment originates from Vygotskian sociocultural theory. Vygotskian sociocultural theory posits that consciousness is derived from the social world (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed that knowledge and abilities that once resided in an individual’s social interactions on the interpsychological plane (i.e., between people) become internalized and can be used as a resource for new cognitive functions on the intrapsychological plane (i.e., inside a person) (Vygotsky, 1978). This internalization occurs through mediation (Davin & Gómez-Pereira, 2019) with mediation being “the process through which humans deploy culturally constructed artifacts, concepts, and activities to regulate (i.e., gain voluntary control over and transform) the material world of their own and each other’s mental activity” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 79). Vygotsky makes an important distinction between “unassisted performance, as was and is typically required on static educational and psychological measures, and student performance when instructed by a more knowledgeable other” (Dumas, McNeish, & Greene, 2020, p. 90). The difference between a student’s unassisted performance and their assisted performance on a task was termed the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Dumas et al., 2020). Vygotsky defines the ZPD as, “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Conceptually based on the ZPD, dynamic assessment is the unification of assessment and instruction into a singular, dialogue-based activity (McNeil, 2018).
Dynamic assessment attempts to understand the scope of a learner’s abilities through the promotion of their development (Poehner, 2007). To accurately understand a learner’s abilities, dynamic assessment embeds instruction and feedback into the assessment procedure. Though the use of questions, hints, prompts, suggestions, or explanations, an assessor may “guide learners in highlighting important content, making connections, setting goals, planning, regulating and controlling behavior” (Antón, 2009, p. 579). Interactions between the assessor and the learner are not haphazard; they are carefully attuned (i.e., mediated) to the learner’s current abilities and provided incrementally. In addition, the assessor focuses “on helping the learner advance their conceptual understanding” (Antón, 2019, p. 119). If a learner experiences difficulty during administration of the dynamic assessment, then “the mediator responds to learners’ discourse by adjusting intervention to what is needed in each individual case in order to complete the task and show the full potential of the learners’ ability” (Antón, 2009, p. 592). Dynamic assessment can be used to “measure language abilities, intervene in learning, and document learners’ growth” (Antón, 2009, p. 576). The two kinds of mediation that researchers can employ when administering dynamic assessment are interventionist and interactionist.

Interactionist dynamic assessment employs mediation which is flexible, open-ended, and emerges from the interactions between the assessor and the learner(s). In interventionist dynamic assessment, mediation is dependent upon the quality of the interaction between the assessor and the learner (Antón, 2009). Mediation is negotiated with a learner by continually being adjusted according to the learner’s developmental needs (Lantolf, 2009). Interactionist dynamic assessment is focused on gaining an insight into the kinds of psychological process that the learner might be capable of in the next phase of development and identifying the kinds of instruction, or assistance that will be required if the learner is to realize this potential (Minick, 1987). Examples of interactionist dynamic assessment include implementing a language enrichment program with advanced learners of L2 French (Poehner, 2008), and devising individualized instructional plans for third-year Spanish majors (Antón, 2009). Because this approach it is labour-intensive, non-standardized, and time-consuming, it is more suited for generating detailed qualitative data on individuals or a relatively small number of learners.

Interventionist dynamic assessment relies on standardized administration procedures. Assessors use prescribed clues which are carefully arranged on a scale from implicit (e.g., pausing to indicate a problem) to explicit (e.g., explaining a concept) and are usually assigned a numerical value. This list of pre-scripted prompts is often referred to as a regulatory scale (Rassaei, 2019). Starting with the most appropriate implicit clue, the assessor administers the prescribed clues, until either the learner answers correctly or the final clue is reached. The point at which a learner is able to make use of the assistance provided indicates to the assessor the learner’s emergent abilities and supports their development (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). As the number of predetermined hints that interventionist dynamic assessment uses is fixed and standardized, comparable numerical scores can be generated for each participant (Lantolf, 2009). Examples of interventionist dynamic assessment include promoting L2 development and tracing learner independent functioning post mediation (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011), and diagnosing learner abilities and areas for further instruction (Poehner, Zhang, & Lu, 2015). Interventionist dynamic assessment is often conducted with large numbers of participants to produce quantitative data which can be compared at the group level.
Regulatory Scales and the Learning of L2 Form

A regulatory scale is a graduated continuum which starts with the provision of broad and implicit assistance and progresses to providing more focused and explicit assistance. The use of a regulatory scale allows researchers to provide feedback in a predetermined and structured way. Regulatory scales have been utilized by researchers for decades; examples include: assessing learners’ learning potential (Budoff & Friedman, 1964), assessing the learning and transfer of inductive reasoning (Ferrara, Brown, & Campione, 1986), and testing language aptitude (Guthke & Beckmann, 2000).

In the field of SLA, perhaps the most influential study involving a regulatory scale was carried out by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994). Although not specifically framed as dynamic assessment, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) investigated the relationship between error correction and language learning. Three intermediate ESL learners volunteered for eight extra tutorial sessions that focused on reoccurring grammatical problems (i.e., articles, tense marking, prepositions, and modal verbs) within their writing. The researcher in this study endeavoured to diagnose areas of difficulty and to help learners gain control over the relevant structures. The mediation between the researcher and the learner emerged spontaneously from their interaction. An analysis of the tutorial sessions led to the creation of a 13-point regulatory scale (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994) that captures relative degrees of explicitness. This regulatory scale was employed when analysing the interactions that took place. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) were able to show how independent linguistic production alone does not provide a full picture of L2 learning; it is also essential to acknowledge the existence of, and attempt to understand emergent knowledge.

Two SLA studies have applied a regulatory scale to the learning of grammar. Firstly, van Compernolle and Zhang (2014) employed interventionist dynamic assessment to investigate one learner’s implicit grammatical competence through elicited imitation. Elicited imitation requires learners to repeat strings of words, phrases, or sentences. van Compernolle and Zhang (2014) targeted three word-final morphological features (i.e., plural –s, past tense –ed, and third-person singular –s). The learner was required to listen to a statement, identify whether the statement is true or false, and then repeat the statement. The learner had up to four attempts to correctly repeat the statement. If the learner was not successful, graduated mediation as provided, ranging from more implicit (i.e., listening to the statement again) to more explicit (i.e., provision for the correct form and explanation). The less assistance the learner required, the higher they scored for each statement. The results were used to calculate a learning potential score and to create a detailed diagnostic profile of the learner’s current and emerging abilities.

Secondly, Mohammadmoghadam (2015) employed interventionist dynamic assessment to investigate the effects of mediation on one EFL learner’s development of tag questions. After an initial pretest, a mediation phase was administered in which the learner answered questions pertaining to the target structure. Feedback was provided in the form of interventionist dynamic assessment, which was guided by an eight-point regulatory scale. Each point on the scale was allocated a score. Scores ranged from seven for the most implicit feedback (i.e., a pause) to zero for the most explicit feedback (i.e., identification and explanation of the correct answer). These scores were then compared to the pretest results and used to calculate a learning potential score. Mohammadmoghadam (2015) concluded that participating in the dynamic assessment procedure improved the learner’s performance of English tag questions. This conclusion is
expected. As well as revealing the depth of a learner’s abilities, dynamic assessment also helps learners to realize their future by acting as a catalyst for development (Poehner, 2007). In summary, both van Compernolle and Zhang (2014) and Mohammadimoghadam (2015) utilized a regulatory scale within the framework of interventionist dynamic assessment in order to gain insights into learners’ emergent grammatical abilities.

Previous studies which have attempted to measure the efficacy of collaboratively learning L2 form have only attempted to measure linguistic knowledge that was already relatively developed at the time of testing through the use of non-dynamic testing. These studies did not attempt to take into account the impact that working collaboratively may have on learner abilities which are still in the process of developing. Thus, the treatment activities used in these studies may have been more effective than initially thought.

The present study seeks to provide a deeper understanding on the efficacy of learning L2 form collaboratively. The following research question was asked. To what extent does working collaboratively to complete form-focused tasks impact on Qatari undergraduate learners’ longer-term performance of two complex grammatical structures? To quantify emergent learning gains, a regulatory scale was employed within the framework of interventionist dynamic assessment.

Methods

The methodology presented in this article is taken from a larger study (see Scotland, 2017); what follows is the methodology relevant to the data presented.

Participants

Six classes of male students were invited to participate in the study. The participants were recruited over two semesters. Three parallel classes participated in the first semester; three parallel classes participated in the second semester. Convenient sampling was employed. All classes were taught by the teacher who agreed to help with the study. Thus, the participants were students who happened to find themselves in one of these classes. Initially, 105 students volunteered to participate in this study; however, this number was later reduced to 52 participants (see Procedures). All participants were between 17-44 years old, nationals of Arabic speaking countries, and shared Arabic as their L1. Approval to carry out the study was given by the institute’s review board. Participation in the study was voluntary. Written informed consent was given by all participants.

This study is situated within a B1+ level (Council of Europe, 2001) general proficiency English course which is part of the core curriculum of a Qatari institute of higher education. This student-centred course provides learners with an opportunity to develop their skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Readings and listening are taken from a diverse range of texts. In addition, there is a focus on both semi-formal and formal writing skills. The teaching of vocabulary, grammar, and critical thinking skills is embedded into the curriculum. The course requires five contact hours per week over a 15-week period.

Research Instruments

A quasi-experimental pretest-treatment-posttest design was employed. Three groups were utilized. Due to the use of pre-existing classes, the sampling was convenient. An experimental
group completed the treatment tasks collaboratively; a comparison group completed the treatment tasks individually; and a control group did not complete the treatment tasks. All groups completed the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest. Quantitative data was collected three times (i.e., pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest) using interventionist dynamic assessment over a 12-week period. Between the pretest and the posttest, six separate treatment tasks were administered (figure one).

The experiment was carried out twice over two consecutive semesters. The data generated was combined, producing one data set for each condition (i.e., learning collaboratively, learning individually, and the control). By examining group level changes in performance across tests, the present study attempted to determine to what extent completing the treatment tasks collaboratively impacted upon the participants’ knowledge of the target structures.

**Figure 1. Design Overview**

The simple past passive (e.g., *The question was answered by the student*) and the present continuous passive (e.g., *The question is being answered by the student*) were chosen as the target structures. These target structures were selected because they were part of the curriculum of the course in which this study is situated and complex enough to allow for a dynamic assessment procedure to detect incremental changes in the participants’ performance of grammatical form.

Linguistic knowledge is operationalized as the ability to accurately write two predetermined structures of the passive voice at the sentence level with the aid of prescripted assistance (i.e., through the use of interventionist dynamic assessment). Linguistic development is operationalized as a reduction in the explicitness of assistance required during testing to accurately write these two predetermined structures.

**Tests**

The tests were designed around the principles of interventionist dynamic assessment. To create an obligatory context for the production of the target structures, each test item created a
scenario which required the participants to produce a predetermined target sentence (see figure two).

Figure 2. Example Test Item

Each test item was a sentence level written production task which required a constrained constructed response (Norris & Ortega, 2000). A stem sentence begins each target sentence. The main verb and the agent are supplied in parentheses. The participants were expected to use and modify the words in the parentheses as well as adding their own function words to complete the sentence. Participants were given four attempts to correctly write each target sentence. After each incorrect attempt, prescripted assistance was provided. For each target structure, a bank of test items was created.

Several principles guided the construction of each test item. Firstly, the answers that the participants needed to produce were standardized. Only regular verbs were used; all of the sentences required an agent; the verb and the agent in the stem sentence never shared the same root word; and no phrasal verbs or modal passives were used. Secondly, the composition of the paragraphs was controlled. Most words were within the first three thousand words of the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (BNC/COCA); each paragraph contained four to seven sentences and between 35-53 words; all of the paragraphs had a minimum Flesch-Kincaid readability test score of 70; each target sentence was placed in the middle of its paragraph; and all sentences within a paragraph, except the target sentence, were in the active voice.

Due to time constraints, each test item was piloted non-dynamically. The facility index and the discrimination index of each test item was calculated. Six test items were removed from the test banks. A Cronbach alpha was calculated for all of the remaining items. The test bank of simple past passive test items scored 0.843 and consisted of 21 items; the test bank of present continuous passive test items scored 0.887 and consisted of 24 items. Due to the need to comply
with a time limit (see Procedures) when administering a test, each test contained two test items, one for the structure of the simple past passive and one for the structure of the present continuous passive. A randomization program was used to select the items for each test.

The Regulatory Scale

In order to quantify the explicitness of assistance required to accurately write a target structure, prescripted clues were created. These clues were adapted from Aljaafreh and Lantolf’s (1994) thirteen-point regulatory scale and were organized into four categories of support (table one). The categories consisted of: indication of the presence of (a) problem(s), indication of the location of (a) problem(s), provision of specific information about (a) problem(s), and provision of the correct answer. Each category is based around the explicitness of the assistance required to write a target structure during testing. The categories were arranged from most implicit to most explicit and were each assigned a score (see table one).

If a participant writes the correct answer on their first attempt, then the participant is considered to be able to perform independently within the context of the test and receives a score of four. If a participant initially writes an incorrect answer, the assessor provides the appropriate clue within the first category of assistance; the participant is alerted to the existence of their mistake(s). In the next category of assistance, the participant is shown the location of their mistake(s). Then, the participant is given specific information about the nature of each mistake and alerted to its specific location. Finally, the correct answer is revealed. Due to the need to comply with a time limit (see Procedures) when administering a test, explanations of incorrect answers were not given, and linguistic terms such as past participle were not explained. Scores only represent the explicitness of the assistance provided to write a target structure not the amount of assistance provided or the content of the assistance provided.

Table 1. The prescribed assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of assistance</th>
<th>Example of phrasing</th>
<th>Physical action of assessor</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indication of the presence of (a) problem(s)</td>
<td>There is a mistake./There are mistakes.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indication of the location of (a) problem(s)</td>
<td>There is a mistake here.</td>
<td>To indicate location of mistake(s)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sentence needs to be in the simple past/present continuous tense.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This word needs to be in the past/present.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The main verb should be a past participle.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You need to use a different preposition.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of specific information about (a) problem(s)</td>
<td>A/an be verb/ing be verb/past participle/preposition is missing here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To indicate the word which is incorrect</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To indicate the word which is incorrect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To indicate the location of the missing word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Treatment Tasks

There were six treatment sessions. For each target structure, the following tasks were created: a guided learning task, a text-editing task, and a dictogloss task. See appendices A, B, and C for an example of each. Research has shown that guided learning can be more effective than didactic instruction (Alfieri et al., 2011). In addition, text-editing and dictogloss tasks have been used previously when investigating the efficacy of collaborative learning the passive voice (Eckerth, 2008; Kuiken & Vedder, 2002).

The construction of each treatment task was controlled. Excluding proper nouns, words depicted by accompanying pictures, or contemporary words that were very familiar to the participants, all words used for the text-editing and dictogloss task were within the first three thousand words of the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (BNC/COCA). The paragraphs used for the text-editing task and the dictogloss task have a Flesch-Kincaid readability score of 70 or higher.

Research Procedures

Data collection followed the timeline in table two.

Table 2. Timeline of events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td></td>
<td>demo</td>
<td>testing procedure, form, and consent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pretest and guided learning task (simple past passive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>guided learning task (present continuous passive)</td>
<td>text-editing task (simple past passive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>posttest</td>
<td>delayed posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td></td>
<td>text-editing task (present passive)</td>
<td></td>
<td>dictogloss task (simple past passive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>delayed posttest</td>
<td>text-editing task (simple past passive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence exists that interleaved learning conditions are more effective than blocked learning conditions (Carpenter & Mueller, 2013; Rohrer, 2012). Therefore, the sequence of the treatment sessions alternated between target structures. Although the target structures are part of the course in which this study took place, the official course content associated with them was not delivered to all participants until just after the delayed posttest.
Testing took place during class time. On a day of testing, the class teacher proceeded with the scheduled lesson. Each participant then stepped out of the classroom and was tested. In order to cause as little disruption as possible to the academic lives of the participants, a five-minute time limit for testing was imposed. When being tested, each participant was told the following, ‘Read the paragraph. Use these words to write the missing sentence’. If required, the assessor gave additional instruction on an ad hoc basis on how to complete a test. No time limit for writing the first sentence was imposed; however, for each subsequent sentence a time limit of 30 seconds was imposed. If a sentence was not complete after this time, then the assessor administered the appropriate clues within the next category of assistance. If requested, a clue was repeated. Apart from the initial sentence, the participants did not have to write in complete sentences; they could alter existing sentences by writing replacement words underneath. Participants who were not able to complete a test within the prescribed five-minute time limit were still provided with the correct answer(s). Due to the time constraints of administering tests during scheduled lessons, testing took place over several consecutive days.

The treatment sessions occurred during class time and were administered by the participants’ regular class teacher in a whole class setting. The comparison group completed the treatment tasks individually. The experimental group completed the treatment sessions in self-selected groups of two or three. Learner roles within the experimental group (e.g., scribe) were not prescribed and no L1 restrictions were imposed. Post-task feedback was given by the teacher in a whole class setting.

In an attempt to standardize opportunities for learning for all participants, it was desirable that each participant complete all tests and all treatment tasks. Fifty-three participants were absent for either one or more tests and/or one or more treatment sessions, and were thus excluded from the present study. In total, there were 52 complete data sets. These data sets were distributed as follows: control group \((n = 16)\), comparison group \((n = 16)\), and experimental group \((n = 20)\).

**Results**

Each participant’s score was quantified based on the explicitness of the clues required to complete a test item (see table one). The scores ranged from zero to four. If on a subsequent test participants showed a reduction in the explicitness of assistance required to produce a target structure and thus received a higher score, then linguistic development is considered to have taken place. The test score data are ordinal in nature; thus, the most appropriate measure of central tendency is the median (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

**Descriptive Statistics**

Table three provides the median and range scores. Descriptive differences exist between the results of the target structures. Nearly all median scores for the simple past passive are higher than their equivalent score for the present continuous passive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Simple past passive</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Delayed Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Mdn)</td>
<td>(Range)</td>
<td>(Mdn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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To better understand the effectiveness of the treatment tasks, the median score differences between consecutive tests were calculated for each participant by subtracting earlier scores from latter scores at the individual level. Table four provides the median score differences and respective ranges for each group.

Table four shows that only the comparison and experimental groups were able to achieve median score gains. The comparison group achieved a median score gain from the pretest to the posttest for the structure of the simple past passive, and the experimental group achieved median score gains from the pretest to the posttest for both target structures. Furthermore, the collaborative condition was responsible for the largest median score gains. In contrast, the control group did not achieve any median score gains, and for all groups no median score gains were achieved from the posttest to the delayed posttest for both target structures. However, for both target structures, no groups recorded median score declines between consecutive tests. Thus, all groups either improved or maintained their level of performance between tests. Table four also indicates that the highest range was seven and the lowest range was three. Since a participant could score a maximum of four points on any given test, a range of over four indicates that the scores of some participants decreased from one test to the next.

Table 4. Median score differences and respective ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Simple past passive</th>
<th>Present continuous passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest-Posttest</td>
<td>Posttest-Delayed Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mdn</td>
<td>Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trends Within the Data**

A relatively large proportion of each group’s participants were unable to improve on their previous test score. In total, there are 101 unchanged scores (table five).
Table 5. Amount and location of unchanged scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Simple past passive</th>
<th>Present continuous passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest - Posttest</td>
<td>Posttest - Delayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 16)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 16)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 20)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table five shows that the control group has the highest number of unchanged scores (45). Furthermore, for both target structures a relatively large proportion of the participants in the comparison and experimental groups received the treatment and yet were unable to improve on a previous test score.

There are thirty instances of a participant’s score declining. This breaks down into seven for the control group, eleven for the experimental group, and twelve for the comparison group (table six). Across the groups, the majority of these performance declines occurred between the posttests and the delayed posttests (twenty-two); however, eight score declines also occurred between the pretests and the posttests.

Table 6. Amount and location of score declines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Simple past passive</th>
<th>Present continuous passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest - Posttest</td>
<td>Posttest - Delayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 16)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 16)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 20)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although much individual variation exists within the data, the largest proportion of the recorded performance gains for both target structures can be attributed to the experimental group and occurred after the treatment condition of collaborative learning had been administered.

**Effectiveness of Intervention**

The effectiveness of the treatment tasks was determined by analysing individual participants’ score changes between tests (i.e., between score gains/declines at the individual level). In total, there are twelve data sets. This is due to having three conditions (i.e., control, comparison, and experimental), two target structures (i.e., simple past passive, and present continuous passive), and two test score changes (i.e., pretest to posttest, and posttest to delayed posttest).
A Shapiro–Wilk test revealed that seven of the data sets significantly deviate from normality and that there is no robust evidence that five data sets differ from normality. Additionally, a Non-parametric Levene $F$-test revealed that the data sets for the structure of the simple past passive have a statistically similar variance; whilst, the data sets for the structure of the present continuous passive violate the homogeneity of variance. Taking into consideration the results of the Shapiro–Wilk test and the Non-parametric Levene $F$-test, the data is analysed using non-parametric tests. This results in the data analysis being more robust.

A Mood’s median test was employed in order to analyse the median score differences (Mood, 1954). Mood’s median test was selected because it can be used with three independent groups, can be used with ordinal data, and it does not make assumptions about distribution (i.e., whether the data is normally distributed and whether the variance of the data is approximately equal across samples). For each target structure, the score differences between consecutive tests were compared across treatment conditions (Table seven).

Table 7. Mood’s median test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consecutive tests</th>
<th>Mood’s median test (Simple past passive)</th>
<th>Present continuous passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$df$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest-Posttest</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest-Delayed Posttest</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p \leq .05$

For the target structure of the present continuous passive, the results of the Mood’s median test suggest that completing the treatment tasks, either individually, collaboratively, or not at all, did not have a statistically significant effect on the performance of the participants. However, a statistically significant effect was found between the pretest and posttest for the target structure of the simple past passive ($M = 7.79$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.02$). Additionally, the non-significance from the posttests to the delayed posttests for both target structures confirms that learning was maintained. The Mood’s median test does not identify between which groups the statistically significant differences occurred. Thus, a post-hoc analysis is required.

In order to conduct a post-hoc analysis, the Mood’s median test was repeated on the results of the simple past passive from the pretest to posttest with a different group omitted from the analysis each time (Mood, 1954) (see table eight). A Bonferroni adjustment was made by dividing the alpha level (0.05) by the number of between group comparisons (three), resulting in a post-hoc alpha level of 0.02. In order to better understand the strength of any association, the effect size was calculated using Cramer’s coefficient (Cramér’s $V$).

Table 8. Post-hoc analysis for the simple past passive between the pretest and posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups Compared</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
<th>Cramér’s $V$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control - Comparison</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison - Experimental</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental - Control</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p \leq .02$
The results of the post-hoc analysis suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between the performance of the experimental group and the performance of the control group for the structure of the simple past passive between the pretest and the posttest ($M = 7.70$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.01$). Furthermore, the difference between these groups is approaching a large effect (Cramér’s $V = 0.46$). A moderate effect exists between the control and comparison groups (Cramér’s $V = 0.33$); however, the $p$-value suggests that this effect is not statistically significant ($M = 3.46$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.06$). No statistically significant difference was found between the experimental and comparison groups for the structure of the simple past passive between the pretest and the posttest ($M = 0.82$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.36$).

Discussion

This study utilized interventionist dynamic assessment when investigating whether L2 learners who are situated within an undergraduate Qatari EFL context learn L2 grammatical structures more effectively by completing a series of treatment tasks either collaboratively or individually. The descriptive statistics suggest that the treatment condition of working collaboratively had a greater impact on the participants’ linguistic development than either completing the treatment tasks individually or not completing them at all. Furthermore, the absence of median score declines between the posttests and the delayed posttests suggests that the collaborative condition’s gains were stable over the duration of the study. However, only one statistically significant difference was found. A Mood’s median test shows a pretest to posttest statistically significant difference, which is moderate to large in size (Cramér’s $V = 0.46$), between the performance of the collaborative condition and the performance of the control group for the structure of the simple past passive (Mood, 1954). Thus for the target structure of the simple past passive, there is a moderate to large association between completing the treatment tasks collaboratively and the resulting linguistic development when compared to not completing the treatment tasks. No other statistically significant differences were found.

No statistically significant differences were found between the collaborative condition and the individual condition. This suggests that for the participants in this study completing the treatment tasks collaboratively was not significantly more effective in facilitating linguistic development than completing the treatment tasks individually. The absence of statistically significant differences between the results of these two groups suggests that the descriptive differences between them may be due to random variation, measurement error, or a lack of statistical power. This finding is largely in line with previous SLA research which has investigated working collaboratively and the attainment of specific grammatical outcomes. When employing a pretest-treatment-posttest design to investigate the effectiveness of working collaboratively in order to learn predetermined grammatical structures, two studies found statistically significant differences at posttesting between the conditions of working collaboratively and working individually (Spielman-Davidson, 2000; Teng, 2020), whilst all other studies found that although descriptive differences were present between the two learning conditions, statistically significant differences were absent (Kuiken & Vedder, 2002; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Reinders, 2009). As these studies all employed the attainment of specific grammatical outcomes as their dependent variables, it is possible that working collaboratively may be better suited to tasks which have a more open-ended outcome.
The median score gains for the control group show no group-level development. As well as obtaining a nuanced understanding of the participants’ linguistic development, the use of interventionist dynamic assessment also had the potential to promote the participants’ linguistic knowledge of the target structures (Mohammadimoghadam, 2015). However, at the group-level, there is no evidence that participants who did not complete the treatment tasks developed their knowledge of either target structure. Several explanations exist. Firstly, the assistance provided during testing was predetermined and standardized; it was not intentionally tailored to the needs of each participant. Secondly due to the five-minute testing time limit, it is probable that some participants rushed reading the scenarios contained with each test item as well as writing their initial answers. Thirdly, participants who were unable to correctly write a target structure were shown the correct answer but were not provided with a corresponding explanation. Fourthly, in comparison to the other two groups the control group has the highest median pretest score for the structure of the simple past passive. Thus, the scope for gains for this target structure was more limited in comparison to the other two groups. Finally, the control group only contained 16 participants; thus, the results could have been affected by learner variation.

Within the data, there were 101 unchanged between test scores. Twenty-nine scores of participants who received the treatment, either individually or collaboratively, remained unchanged from their pretest to their posttest. One explanation is that the treatment tasks as well as the assistance provided during the pretest were ineffective for some participants. Another explanation concerns the sensitivity of the data collection tools. In order to score points, a participant’s answer needed to be entirely correct. Thus, the performance of these participants may have improved but not enough to register a score on a data collection tool.

Within the data, there are 30 instances of a participant’s score declining between consecutive tests. Several explanations exist. Firstly, a participant may have correctly guessed the answer on a preceding test. Due to time constraints, for both target structures only a single test item was administered; there was no verification from a second test item. Secondly, a participant may not have understood the scenario created by an item on a subsequent test. Thirdly, a participant may have not taken a subsequent test seriously. Finally, completing the treatment sessions may have negatively affected the performance of some participants.

The high levels of individual variation within the data indicate that some learners benefited more from participating in the study than others. Other studies which have investigated learner-learner interaction have also reported considerable individual variation (Adams, 2007; Fernández Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2005; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). The large amount of individual variation contained within the data suggests that the sample size may be too small to conduct research with this design.

The design of this study contains several limitations. Firstly, this study’s design is too complex. This study’s design contains two target structures; the intention was to provide two dependent variables. However, the target structures have a similar syntactic structure and share some of the same parts of speech (e.g., past participle and the preposition ‘by’). Consequently, linguistic input received when competing a test or treatment task pertaining to one of the target structures could potentially aid the development of the other target structure. Secondly, this study has a sample of 52. The small sample size limited the power of the statistics. Repeating this
study with a larger sample size may result in the emergence of more statistically significant differences. Thirdly, the testing procedure contained time limits. Due to the five-minute testing time limit, it is probable that some participants rushed reading the scenarios that were contained within the test items as well as writing their initial answers. Fourthly, the post-task feedback given by the teacher was not carefully controlled. Thus, the post-task feedback given to the experimental and comparison groups could have differed. Finally, neither in its design or in its data analysis did this study control for the intervening factors of age and proficiency level.

Conclusion

The present study attempted to investigate a possible relationship between collaboratively completing form-focused tasks and linguistic development for Qatari undergraduate learners. Although measuring emergent abilities which are still in the process of developing provided a more complete picture of the efficacy of working collaboratively, no statistically significant differences were found between the results of the collaborative condition and the results of the individual condition. The lack of a statistically significant difference between the performances of the experimental and comparison groups for both target structures suggests that working collaboratively is not statistically more effective in facilitating learners’ linguistic development than working individually. However due to the major limitations of this study, caution needs to be exercised when coming to any conclusions. Future research could include repeating a version of this study which addresses its limitations. In addition, the dynamic assessment procedure utilized within this study could be computerized.

About the Author

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Appendices
Appendix A
The Guided Learning Task for the Structure of the Simple Past Passive

**Part 1**

**Example Sentences**

Sentence 1: The student took the exam.

Sentence 2: The exam was taken by the student.

1a) In sentence 1, who took the exam?
______________________________________________________________________________

1b) In sentence 2, who took the exam?
______________________________________________________________________________

1c) Is the meaning of the sentences different? Yes/No  
If yes, then how?
______________________________________________________________________________

Circle the correct word

2a) Sentence 1 is in the past/present/future. How do you know?
______________________________________________________________________________

2b) Sentence 2 is in the past/present/future. How do you know?
______________________________________________________________________________

Fill in the missing number

3a) How many words are in sentence 1?
______________________________________________________________________________

3b) How many words are in sentence 2?
______________________________________________________________________________

3c) Which words are different?
______________________________________________________________________________

Circle the correct word

4a) Sentence 1 is in the active/passive voice.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

**The Guided Learning Task for the Structure of the Simple Past Passive**

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**The Efficacy of Completing Form-focused Tasks Collaboratively vs Individually**

Scotland
How do you know?

4b) Sentence 2 is in the active/passive voice. How do you know?

The structure of sentence 1 is

The student took the exam

subject past tense verb object

Use the words in the box to make the structure of sentence 2

subject object past participle be verb by

5a) The exam was taken by the student

5b) The verb phrase of the simple past passive is made using a __________ followed by the ______________ of the main verb.

Part 2
Please change the following sentences to the active voice

Example
Passive: The game was played by the girl
Active: The girl played the game.

1a) Passive: The email was deleted by the worker.
Active: The worker __________________________

1b) Passive: The student was tested by the teacher.
Active: __________________________

1c) Passive: The letters were delivered by the worker.
Active: __________________________

Please change the following sentences to the passive voice
Example

Active: The girl played the game.
Passive: The game was played by the girl

2a) Active: The scientist researched the idea.
Passive: The idea __________________________________________________

2b) Active: The football player scored the goal.
Passive: __________________________________________________________

2c) Active: The police officer investigated the crimes.
Passive: __________________________________________________________

Appendix B
The Text-editing Task for the Structure of the Present Continuous Passive

Directions: Please read the following text. As you read, please underline and correct any mistakes that you find.

Hint – There are six mistakes. Three mistakes are in the active voice and three mistakes are in the passive voice.

Task 1

Right now, Maha is at the zoo. The weather is very nice and the sun is shine brightly. Maha observing a zoo keeper feed two rhinos. The rhinos is being fed fresh grass by the zoo keeper. The grass is chewed by the rhinos. Maha watch by one rhino as it slowly chews the grass. Maha press her hands onto the glass of the enclosure.

Appendix C
The Dictogloss Task for the Structure of the Simple Past Passive

The administration procedures for the dictogloss tasks

- The teacher introduced and explained each stage of the dictogloss task to the participants.
- The teacher played each audio recording thrice. The students took notes during the second and third times.
- The participants were given around 10 minutes to recreate the text and check their reconstruction against the original text.
- The teacher provided feedback in a whole class setting.

Oil was used by people thousands of years ago. In ancient times, it was burned by people in oil lamps for light at night. Also, people covered boats with oil to keep water out and the Chinese used oil as a surface for roads. About a hundred years ago, far more oil was needed as a modern transport industry developed. Luckily, people found large amounts of oil in many parts of the world, including the Middle East and North America.
Dictogloss in Saudi EFL Context: Potential Effects on Students' Writing Skill and Attitudes towards Learning English

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Abstract:
This quasi-experimental study investigates the effects of dictogloss strategy on Saudi EFL writing skills and attitudes towards learning English. It also measures students' attitudes towards learning English using dictogloss activities. The study opens doors for teachers of EFL towards new teaching methods and techniques for writing skills and the English language in general, away from traditional teaching. In order to answer the two main questions of the study, a sample of Saudi EFL college-level students was randomly selected and divided into an experimental group and a control group. The researcher used the dictogloss strategy when teaching the experimental group for five weeks, whereas the students in the control group were taught using the traditional way. Students were matched according to their writing proficiency, instructed by the same teacher (the researcher), and were similar in age. After five weeks of instruction, both groups completed another writing post-test and the attitude questionnaire. Measures of the means, standard deviations, and ANCOVA were used to determine the differences between the two groups. The results revealed a significant statistical difference in students writing skills, including their engagement and motivation in the class and their language output, favoring the experimental group. The study concludes with recommendations for training EFL teachers on using dictogloss when teaching writing and that dictogloss texts should be topic-based materials to integrate different language skills collaboratively.

Keywords: collaborative teaching, dictogloss, EFL writing, Saudi learners writing skills
Introduction

Among the primary language skills, writing, as a productive skill, is probably the most challenging one. Writing has become more challenging than before in an EFL classroom conducive to learning a whole host of language skills. Writing is best taught through reading; the more the learner reads, the better his writing skills become. With the increasing use of social media, writing has become an indispensable tool. Therefore, EFL teachers are not concerned with what to teach; instead, they are more focused on enhancing the learner's performance of writing skills. New teaching insights have now come into play to avoid neglecting writing skills. Traditional methods of teaching writing have been successfully replaced by more innovative ideas, which aim to make writing more engaging and less tiring. In addition, EFL teachers now advocate including more than one skill in learning another, a facet that is fundamental in dictogloss strategy.

Although innovative in style and content, EFL has not yet received special attention from methodologists, researchers, and EFL practitioners on teaching writing through integrating collaborative listening, reading, and speaking. Results of studies and the feedback of many Saudi EFL teachers confirm that EFL learners’ writing skill is getting less emphasis in Saudi schools. EFL learners make sloppy mistakes, are unaware of cohesion words and transitional connectors, and cannot string words together to form meaning (Al-Hazmi, 2006). Therefore, the current research study aims to investigate the effect of dictogloss on improving EFL Saudi learners’ writing skills and their attitudes towards learning English. The current research study is seminal to future considerations, contributing to how EFL teachers and EFL learners may move away from traditional writing skills by providing new insights on applying dictogloss in EFL writing classes. Abbasian and Mohammadi (2013) have made it clear that despite studying the effects of dictogloss on listening, vocabulary, and grammar, "a more fruitful avenue would be to be well-versed in its impact on writing skill" (p.1372). Therefore, the current research study answers the following questions:

1. Are there any statistically significant differences between the students’ mean scores in the writing pre- and post-tests, which may be attributed to the use of dictogloss in teaching writing?
2. What are the students’ attitudes towards learning English using dictogloss activities?

Literature Review

Dictogloss is a teaching procedure that encourages learners to reflect on their output (Wajnryb, 1990). Simply put, dictogloss is a classroom dictation practice whereby learners listen to a read-aloud passage by their teachers. While listening, the learners jot down keywords and ideas to work together later to reproduce a reconstructed version of the read-aloud material. In 1990, Wajnryb introduced “Dictogloss” as an alternative method to the traditional way of teaching grammar. Wajnryb created dictogloss to be practiced in four key steps, which are summarized as follows:

1. **Warm-Up**: learners identify the topic and practice some vocabulary.
2. **Dictation**: The teacher reads aloud the text to the learners at an average speed while taking helpful notes. Typically, the learners listen to the teacher two times: the first time,
3. **Reconstruction**: The learners work in small groups to reconstruct a new version of the read-aloud text.

4. **Analysis and Correction**: here, the learners compare their new versions of the read-aloud text with the original one analyzing it to make any necessary corrections through discussion.

The practice of dictogloss has several advantages both in research and in practice. Kuiken and Vedder (2002) claim a strong association between dictogloss and collaborative writing tasks: “Collaborative writing tasks in L2 or L1 are often assigned as a way to foster reflective thinking” (p.170). When students practice refuting peers' ideas, they develop critical positions to defend their ideas and writing. Pica (2000) also calls for an integration of traditional and recent methods to better address teaching English skills, depending on either way is insufficient or desultory.

A form-focused approach is advocated more than a message-focused approach in that exposure to language is not solely enough. Ellis (2003) argues that form-focused instruction is of good significance to learners, and it helps them modify their interlanguage grammar, which leads to better linguistic accuracy. In the same vein, Nassaji (2000) states that collaborative tasks require learners to be engaged in cooperative language comprehension and production, such as the practice of dictogloss. For Shak (2006), dictogloss is an activity or practice that focuses on form, which provides a meaning-focused context. This task can foster the learners' awareness of discourse and its linguistic features and structures.

Dictogloss has several advantages in the EFL context. It is popular in EFL methodology because of its discourse-based philosophy of language. Mayo (2002) and Thornbury (1997) have explained that dictogloss focuses on meaning as it looks at the whole text. Through practicing dictogloss tasks, learners can draw their attention to the forms of the target language in such meaningful and productive contexts (Swain & Lapkin, 2001). Qin (2008) emphasizes that one of the essential benefits empirically examined is what is known as Language Related Episodes (LREs). In the same vein, Al-Sibai (2008) noted that learners could be engaged in noticing linguistic problems and encouraged to discuss such meaning more straightforwardly in collaborative dialogues. Another benefit of dictogloss is that it presents an excellent opportunity for L2 learners to pay attention to forms; discuss and negotiate them (Al-Sibai, 2008). In addition, Jacobs and Small (2003) claim that through dictogloss, learners feel more motivated and encouraged to focus their attention on form and the primary language skills.

Studies have also shown that writing is an essential language skill and can be enhanced differently. For L2 learners, it is more recommended to teach them writing skills through collaborative techniques such as dictogloss. Bataineh and Younis (2016) examined the potential effect of dictogloss-based training on selected Jordanian EFL teachers’ writing instruction and EFL learners’ writing skills. The results revealed that dictogloss has a significant positive impact on EFL learners' writing skills and practices. In addition, Abbasian and Mohammadi (2013) study revealed that dictogloss had positively affected the participants' writing skills. However, while the impact on the organization and mechanics was positive, usage, vocabulary, and content of the learners' writing were less affected.
Bataineh and Younis (2016) asserted that unlike the traditional method of dictation, dictogloss was an activity through which learners write down what is read to them or spoken by their teachers or a movie or any similar ways. However, Afsharrad and Sadeghi Benis (2014) argued that dictation had lost its efficiency and popularity as other language skills have overshadowed it. Due to the advent of technology, dictation has been deskilled. However, recently it has gained some of its pedagogical and academic fame in EFL practices (Faghani, Derakhshan & Zangoei, 2015). Dictation was not used to measure a learner's level of proficiency solely in spelling; it was also used to measure the learner's holistic command of the language. Simply put, dictogloss is an innovative and holistic tool used to arouse more than one skill of the EFL learners.

Pingan & Bin Mohd (2019) have also investigated the impact of using dictogloss on improving sixth-year students' narrative paragraph writing skills. There was a great improvement in the students' ability to write a paragraph orientation of the narrative text. The study concluded that using dictogloss to teach writing lessons enhances the students' writing ability. Active learning is also obtained once dictogloss is enforced in the writing lesson; students were active, attentive, accountable, independent, skillful, and inventive when composing content.

The studies conducted on the dictogloss were not limited to the language skills but also extended to its effect in perceiving students as active learners and raising their motivation and attitudes towards learning the English language. In this context, Pertiwi, Ngadiso & Drajati (2018) conducted a study investigating the effects of dictogloss, as compared to direct instruction, on eleventh graders' writing. The study also explored the correlation between students' motivation and writing skills. The results showed that dictogloss is more effective than direct instruction when teaching writing, and students with high motivation have better writing skills than those with low motivation.

Finally, writing is a complex learning process through which learners explore their thoughts, discover more innovative ideas, and generate meanings (Nunan, 2010). For all these reasons, dictogloss is an influential teaching tool that makes writing more than a journey. Despite the large number of studies that dealt with the dictogloss strategy and its impacts on different language skills, one can notice the scarcity of studies that dealt with the impact of dictogloss strategy in a context similar to the Saudi context, except for the study of Bataineh & Younis (2016) and Abbasian & Mohammadi (2013), which were conducted in Jordan and Iran respectively. Also, most previous studies examined the impact of dictogloss on "dictation" as part of the writing skill, while the current study focuses on descriptive writing and its various mechanics. In addition, the current study adopts classroom observation to understand and interpret the quantitative results of the writing test. The current study also explores students' attitudes towards learning English using dictogloss and their evaluation of its impact on different language skills. Hence, the importance of this current study lies in bridging the research gap within the Saudi EFL context and shedding light on the effect of dictogloss on students' writing and their attitudes towards the English language.

**Methods**

The current study participants were 39 Saudi EFL undergraduate students studying English 101 at Umm Al-Qura University during the first semester of 2019-2020. In order to
obtain more reliable and unbiased conclusions, the sample was randomly selected and assigned into an experimental group of 20 students and a control group of 19 students. The study lasted for five weeks, totaling 25 hours: one session every day. The experimental group received dictogloss practice, tasks, and drills over the class period, while the control group received traditional instruction designed by the textbook's guidelines. The students in both groups were all males, mostly in their twenties; ages ranged between 19 to 24 years.

The researcher randomly selected seven equally long dictogloss texts of different themes from www.breakingnewsenglish.com. The selection of the texts depended on the ideas suggested by reading (2009) to avoid memorization, rote learning, and overloaded materials. Therefore, students could grasp the general concept and utilize their creativity when reconstructing key concepts, words, and phrases. The selected texts varied in their genre and writing type: Mostly, they were argumentative and informative to help students be more engaged in such read-aloud topics. The study parameters included length of the text, difficulty level, consistent reading speed, and clarity of pronunciation.

In addition, pre-post tests were administered to both groups. The students wrote descriptive paragraphs of their university campus and neighborhood in the pre-test and post-test. The students' pre-/post-test were scored using Obeiah and Batainah’s (2015) adoption of Wang and Liao’s (2008) analytic scoring rubric. Moreover, the researcher asked a colleague (assistant professor of TEFL) to do in-class observation to monitor students' performance, interaction, and motivation. The aim was to learn more about how students in both groups approach, engage, and tackle different activities. For the writing test to be valid (validity), a group of three EFL experts examined the instrument, and the researcher took their suggestions and recommendations into consideration before adopting the final version. Again, for the instrument to be reliable (reliability), the researcher administered the instruments to a small sample of students (20 students) who were not part of the research study. Two weeks later, the same test was re-administered to the same group and scored high reliability: Cronbach alpha =.87.

Finally, students of the experimental group completed an attitude questionnaire to learn more about their attitudes towards the effectiveness of dictogloss in learning English language skills collaboratively. The attitude scale contains 20 items, which were classified as:

- Six items on students' emotions while learning English.
- Four items on attitudes towards listening.
- Three items on attitudes towards speaking.
- Three items on attitudes towards reading.
- Four items on attitudes towards writing.

A panel of 15 EFL university professors established the validity of the questionnaire, and their feedback was used to adjust the instrument. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by administering it to the students (n=15) sample, which was not part of the study sample. The reliability coefficient of the test was $\alpha = 0.87$, which is a good indicator for high reliability. Finally, the purpose of this questionnaire was explained to students; they were asked to rate their opinions, on a scale of fair, reasonable, excellent, about how helpful dictogloss activities were in learning English. Students were assured that all personal data would not be revealed to any third party.
Procedures

For the experimental group, the dictogloss practices were conducted as the following sequential steps:

1. The selected topic was introduced to the students, creating a robust engagement to discuss it with the students through keywords or ideas;
2. The main vocabulary of each text or topic was introduced and taught to the students through different ways, among other things, visual aids, synonyms, and examples;
3. The selected text was played aloud at an average reading speed by a recorded voice downloaded from www.breakingnewsenglish.com to ensure that no student is left behind;
4. Students were asked to write keywords, phrases, and ideas as cues to spur them to remember the topic well;
5. A mini-discussion was held by the teacher and the students to discuss the selected items (words, ideas, and phrases);
6. This time, the teacher himself read aloud the text at a typical reading speed with pauses between the main sentences to ensure the students' comprehension.
7. The students were asked to pair up: they divided themselves into groups. They were asked to write their sentences, depending on the notes they took. Then they were asked to compare their work with that of other groups. Here, the students were asked to discuss the correct answers and how to modify their answers;
8. The teacher read aloud the text again so that the students working in groups started to reconstruct the original text, depending on the information they could recall or the notes they took.
9. The teacher checked the work of each group.
10. The teacher asked each student to write his final version of the original text. Again, the teacher asked the students to pair up and work in groups to ensure their correct grammar, content, capitalization and punctuation rules and sequencing of ideas;
11. The teacher checked the final versions of the group work. The teacher then showed the students the final version of the text, providing them with constructive feedback and tips for enhancing their work when conducted next time.
12. Throughout this process, the observer teacher took notes of students’ interaction, reactions to instructions, and any other actions they took while doing tasks.

As for the control group, the students were taught following the conventional way as instructed in the teacher’s manual. The procedure went through the following sequential steps:

1. The topic was introduced by the teacher.
2. The vocabulary was introduced separately from the topic;
3. The teacher introduced ways to explain the aim of the essays, which helped to generate and organize ideas, leading to essay-editing practice;
4. The students did not listen to the text or have it read by the teacher. They had direct instruction;
5. The students were asked to use their new words and ideas to write the text based on the discussion they held with the teacher;
6. The students were not engaged at all in any group work.
Findings

Before performing the primary statistical test to answer the research questions, descriptive results were obtained to achieve a general understanding of the differences between the means of the two groups, as shown in Table one 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>Pre: 12.60</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 16.65</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Pre: 11.78</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 11.73</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one shows that the control group's mean pre-test score was 11.78, and the post-test score was 11.73. On the other hand, the experimental group's mean pre-test score was 12.60, and the post-test score was 16.65.

These statistics indicate a difference between the mean scores of the two groups in the post-test. To determine the significance of this difference and to answer the first research question, a one-way between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted to measure the effectiveness of using dictogloss on students' writing skills. The use of dictogloss was the independent variable, while the dependent variable consisted of students' scores on a writing test after they were trained on how to use the strategy. Participants' scores on the pre-test were used as the covariate in this analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Partial Squared</th>
<th>Eta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>93.44</td>
<td>44.23</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.787</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>180.18</td>
<td>85.30</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.703</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32.78</td>
<td>15.51</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.463</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R Squared = .787 (Adjusted R Squared = .769)
Computed using alpha = .05

The results of the ANCOVA (as shown in table 2) show that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups on post-writing test scores, $p = .000$, partial eta squared = .46. Thus, the partial eta squared value indicates that 46% of the variance in students' writing scores is explained using the dictogloss strategy (independent variable).

Finally, to answer the second question (What are the students’ attitudes towards learning English using dictogloss activities?), the researcher administered an attitude questionnaire to the experimental group to gauge how the students reacted towards dictogloss practice in class. Table (3) shows the attitudes of the experimental group (20 students) towards the dictogloss practices.
The results displayed here are the number and percentage of students according to their answers to the following question: How do you evaluate dictogloss activities in learning English?

Table 3. *Opinions of the experimental group about dictogloss*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ emotions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictogloss Benefits (Writing)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictogloss Benefits (Reading)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictogloss Benefits (Listening)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictogloss Benefits (Speaking)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

By answering the first question, dictogloss positively impacts developing students’ writing skills, which is indicated by the statistically significant differences between the means of the students of the experimental and control groups. This result can be explained more by the researcher’s notes during in-class observation as part of feedback on the effect of dictogloss on students’ writing performance:

- Students tried to pick the key ideas or words (mostly adjectives) and write them down, linking listening with the pre-writing stage to prepare for discussion;
- When asked to pair up or work in groups, students identified the spelling problems and immediately corrected them;
- Many students had some pieces of information missing and managed to provide them only when placed in groups;
- While engaged in the discussion, many students corrected their classmates’ misunderstanding, which helped in making the topic clearer to all;
- Many students had difficulty listening to specific ideas or words and thus did not note them down. However, they managed to grasp them only when the text was replayed or reread for them;
- Several students noted the words but had difficulty piecing them together to rewrite the original text. Only through group work did they manage to learn how to use and form such adjectives;
- Several students had difficulty using the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives. When placed in groups, they learned the grammatical equations better: ADJ+ER+THAN and THE+ADJ+EST or MORE+ADJ+THAN and THE+MOST+ADJ;
- Many students linked their listening skills with their writing skills: they reconstructed the text depending on what they listened to and what they knew in writing, spelling, grammar, punctuations, and style;
- Some students were keen on identifying similar-sounding words and helped their group avoid misunderstanding such words (greet vs. great; hard vs. heart; food vs. foot; liar vs. layer).

These findings go in line with Kooshafar, Youhanaee, & Amirian (2012), Bataineh and Younis (2016), and Abbasian & Mohammadi (2013) in confirming that dictogloss has a positive
effect on EFL learners’ writing. Dictogloss can enhance students' writing organization, mechanics, and coherence.

Moreover, as seen in Table three, the students categorically rated the use of dictogloss as either excellent or good on most of the six dimensions. At least 75% of the experimental group perceives dictogloss as a beneficial strategy in learning English. Eighty percent of these students believe that dictogloss helps them when learning writing in particular, as experienced throughout the study. The current results go along with Pertiwi, Ngadiso & Drajati (2018) and Pingan & Bin Mohd Said (2019) in confirming that teaching writing skills by using dictogloss made the students more active successful in the writing class.

Although they were out of the scope of the current study, other percentages of students regarding other language skills can guide more future research towards using dictogloss to enhance reading, listening, and speaking. As for the control group, based on the in-class observation, the students continued to make the same mistakes over the class time allotted. Their development was negligible or infinitesimal. The students’ engagement was a kind of automatic practice, and thus, their improvement was somehow desultory. So Many students felt detached from their class drills that boredom crept over them as the class progressed.

Conclusion

The current research study aimed at investigating the effects of dictogloss strategy on developing Saudi students' writing skills and attitudes towards learning English. Results showed that dictogloss helped improve the students' writing skills in integrating listening and reading skills to writing. Students in the experimental group performed better than the control group in the post-test. In addition, the mini-questionnaire administered to evaluate the attitude of the experimental group towards dictogloss activities in the EFL environment indicated that dictogloss played a vital role in enhancing the learners’ writing skills. Dictogloss also helped improve students’ overall performance in collaborating with selected audio files, read-aloud materials, and group discussion.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, results, and in-class close observations, the researcher would highly recommend the following decisive points:

- EFL teachers should depart from traditional teaching methods and create robust engagement through in-class dictogloss practices, tasks, and drills;
- Selected topics should integrate collaboratively microscopic language skills;
- Dictogloss should receive more attention as it gives friendly opportunities to students to improve while placed in group work;
- Dictogloss should be part of the weekly EFL classes. It activates and jogs the students’ language memory and skills, making the EFL environment more student-centered than a teacher-centered learning environment.

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Effects of Cooperative Learning on Cognitive Engagement and Task Achievement: A Study of Omani Bachelor of Education Program EFL Students

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Abstract
Led by a premise that effective cooperative tasks play a vital role in enhancing Cognitive Engagement (CE) and task achievement in ESL/EFL teaching, this study investigates the effects of Cooperative Learning (CL) on Omani Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) students’ CE and task achievement. This quasi-experimental study has three objectives: (i) To find out the level of awareness of CE skills required during EFL learning sessions; (ii) To examine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students’ responses taught through CL strategies and taught in normal setting; and (iii) To investigate whether there are significant differences among EFL students’ CE levels attributed to their gender. A total of 36 B. Ed. students were assigned to Experimental Group and Control Group with 18 students in each. Analytical results of the study found that (a) The overall CE levels of the students was low at the mean score of 2.20; (b) On statistical grounds, significant differences were found at the level of <0.01 between the mean scores of CE responses of students taught through CL and those who were taught in a normal setting; and (c) No statistically significant differences were found at the level of <0.05 between mean scores of students’ CE responses attributed to their gender. We have discussed a number of pedagogical implications emerging from the findings of this study for raising students’ awareness, enhancing teachers’ roles and responsibilities, effective task designing and developing engaging instructional materials.

Keywords: cognitive engagement, cooperative tasks, disengaged learners, effective teaching learning practices, interactive classroom experience, Omani EFL students, task achievement, task management

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Introduction

The effective teaching-learning procedures and expected learning outcomes hinge on different pedagogical elements. These elements regulate how students develop their knowledge and skills through an interactive classroom experience that engages learners in the tasks management and tasks achievement processes. Similarly, classroom teaching and learning environment aims at activating learners’ interest, introducing rich learning opportunities, and applying effective teaching and learning practices in order to ensure desired students’ cognitive engagement. Previous studies such as Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie (2000); Skinner & Pitzer (2012) and Finn (1989) on CL and CE strongly suggest that disengaged learners generally slowdown in the learning process, become uninterested and inactive during teaching-learning opportunities, weaken their sustained attention and mental effort in attaining cognitive engagement and task performance, which results in failure to achieve the target knowledge and skills. In these researches, task engagement is considered as an important element that promotes active learning and it is also considered as a learning achievement requirement which impacts learners' academic behavior. Furthermore, an important research/finding on Teachers’ Beliefs by Kindsvater, Willen, and Ishler (1988) claims that learning is more effective when it involves collaboration rather than competition.

Precisely speaking, cognitive engagement reflects the extent to which a learner perceives the need for learning in relation to future targets and goals, which is characterized by the students’ engagement in the learning process. The paramount importance of cognitive engagement in the learning process leads researchers to examine the factors that help students engage cognitively while doing the tasks in pursuance and achievement of the target knowledge and skills. Therefore, researchers stress on the importance of investigating students’ cognitive engagement as findings of such studies could uncover and suggest better ways and means of improving upon teaching and learning situations and achieve the target outcomes and results. Walker, Greene, & Mansell’s (2006) study, conducted on 191 college students to uncover the predictors of cognitive engagement, confirmed that self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and academic identification each contributed uniquely to the prediction of meaningful cognitive engagement (p.1). Led by this and such other studies, the present study is conceptualized, framed, and conducted to examine how a planned instructional use of cooperative tasks can trigger and activate the cognition process of Omani EFL students and result in the desired cognitive engagement and task achievement. The study is conducted based on the following research questions.

Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to examine and study the effects of the application of cooperative learning strategies on undergraduate Omani EFL B. Ed. students’ cognitive engagement and task achievement. To achieve this objective, the following research questions are used.

1) To what extent undergraduate B. Ed. students are aware of cognitive engagement skills required for effective learning sessions?
2) Whether there are any statistically significant differences between mean scores of students’ responses taught through cooperative learning strategies and those taught in a normal setting?
3) Whether there are any significant differences among undergraduate B. Ed. students’ cognitive engagement levels attributed to their gender?
Literature Review

To determine the research agenda, the following research studies on the chosen field of cooperative learning and cognitive engagement have been explored and examined to narrow down the focus, direction, and set the research agenda of the present study.

Cooperative Learning

According to Sharan (2010) cooperative learning is about learning together in small groups which promotes value of learning to live together. It is also about the teacher’s ways of using methods and strategies to help develop relationships among students and create a particular environment to maximize participation and engagement from all students in the group. All human identities, as Jenkins (2004) argued are social identities in a matter of meaning and meaning always involves interaction. Doughty & Pica’s (1986) and Long & Porter’s (1985) studies on language learning and interlanguage studies found that language used by the students in the actual processes of engaging with each other and also with the materials in the classrooms proves to be a significant factor in their language learning. Incidentally, ‘Interlanguage’ refers to the language produced by non-native speaking learners who are in the process of learning. The term ‘Conversational Modification’, used by Doughty and Pica (1986), refers to various means by which learners negotiate meaning of input so as to make it comprehensible and personally meaningful. The inference here is that when learners are compelled to negotiate their own meaning, the very process of doing so is an aid to their language learning. This strongly supports the Vygotskian premise that knowledge is co-constructed in the learning process when individuals get engaged with one another through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

The cooperative learning is a collaborative task between the learners and the teacher, in which teachers help learners to develop skills and competencies through the process of dynamic and active learning (Nasser, 2019). Many educators who implement CL strategies believe that teaching and learning should help their students to explore and discover the target knowledge. By re-conceptualizing the learning process in this context, learners will be in a better position to deal with the twenty-first century life challenges, where they will have enough skills and abilities to think critically and provide solutions rather than repeating the textual input (Rassekh, 2004). In this open global society, with the massive social-media exposure, teaching and learning process should be a discursive and interactive process that should go beyond the traditional teaching and information-transmission-based process. In this context, teachers need to facilitate the learning process and guide students to discover, evaluate, and apply in order to achieve the target skills and knowledge.

The review of Hall, et al’s (1988) study suggests that cooperative learning is an alternative to teacher-fronted and top-down teaching approaches where students are expected to become active listeners, take notes during the class presentations, ask their group peers for clarifications, and complete peers’ utterances. Cooperative learning differs from traditional learning as two or more participants are involved in it to learn the content together; they play equal role of a peer and the instructor’s role is minimized; and, presumably, none of the learners are experts in the content to be learnt.

Helme and Clarke (2001) have developed a range of cognitive engagement indicators that reflect on cooperative tasks and activities which include exchanging ideas; completing peer
utterances; giving directions, information, and explanation; questioning; justifying an argument; making evaluative comments; and making relevant gestures and facial expressions.

Overall findings of Liao’s doctoral study (2005) on the effects of CL showed a wide range of positive results on the use of learners’ strategy, their motivation and a range of grammar achievement. The analytical results of the exploratory questions used in the study indicated that CL improved students’ motivation and strategy use across all subgroups; However, those performing at higher and lower levels showed better improvements.

Johnson and Johnson’s study (2018) on CL, as a strong motivational factor, suggests that learners’ cooperative efforts result in a broad range of outcomes that could be place into three broad categories of psychological adjustments; positive interpersonal relationships; and achievement efforts.

Van Ryzin, Mark, Roseth & Cary’s (2021) study hypothesized that the increased social contact created by CL would facilitate greater peer relatedness, reduce student stress and thereby minimize emotional problems and facilitate academic engagement. The study concluded that, “cooperative learning can provide social, behavioral, academic, and mental health benefits for students” (p. 700).

Ferguson-Patrick’s (2020) study emphasizes on CL as a culturally responsive inclusive approach to teaching which could be effectively exploited to support all students. This study found that, “Cooperative learning allows participants to develop a commitment to fairness, social responsibility and a concern for others.” (p. 1). A conclusive finding of this study is that the teachers could manage to develop strong relationships, promote strong engagement, and encourage care in their classrooms. This study finds support from Kostoulas-Makrakis and Makrakis’ (2020) premise that, “The most valuable thing we can offer our learners is genuine care, hope, happiness and love” (p. 178).

Costley’s (2021) study, based on cognitive load theory, conducted on 1399 South Korean university students engaged in collaborative study groups in online classes found that “The amount of collaboration a student engaged in positively affected levels of germane load and that their level of contribution negatively moderated that relationship.” (p. 1). Putting it differently, students who contribute less to the group have greater gains from higher levels of collaboration as compared to students who take a more active role in the group. Incidentally, cognitive load theory has three elements. Germane cognitive load is related to the mental effort applied to retain information and generate schemata of the target knowledge to learn. Extraneous load is about processing unnecessary information. And intrinsic load refers to the content complexity. Similarly, the study conducted by Pee, Kankanhalli & Kim (2010) found that students who make lesser contributions in group work have higher perceived levels of germane cognitive load as compared to the learners who make greater contribution.

**Cognitive Engagement**

According to Helme and Clarke (2001), CE is a process which involves sustained attention and mental effort along with self-regulation strategies. Astin (1984) explains student engagement as the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student puts in to the academic
experience in the classroom. Fredricks, Blumenfield and Paris’ (2004) definition of CE is related to the idea of “investment” which involves willingness and thoughtfulness to apply necessary efforts in understanding complex ideas in order to gain the mastery of difficult skills.

Earlier research in CE, for example of Craik and Lockhart’s (1972), is based on the concept of the memory, which developed the idea of shallow or surface versus deep engagement in the context of textual proceeding of the literature. Anderson’ and Rader’s study (1979) on motivation and strategy use and Craik and Lockhart’s study (1972) on levels of processing found that there are strong links between the type of processing and the memory. Graham and Golan (1991) studied motivation and CE through the application of depth of processing paradigm where they examined the relationship between variations in motivation with deep versus shallow processing. Greene’ and Millers’ (1996) study suggests that motivation variable is directly associated with CE which has a positive influence on the learning outcomes. According to Gedera, Williams, and Write (2015), motivation is counted as the most important contributor for student engagement and internal motivation. The study claims that motivated students tend to be more committed to and invested in learning.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) argue that engagement is a construct which is multidimensional and multifaceted, which includes cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components. These facets of human experience are considered important in Applied Linguistics research. According to Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008), these components are interdependent. In education literature these dimensions are found to be interdependent and overlapping constructs (Christenson, et al, 2012). Rivers (2000), emphasizes on the importance of CE in the process of language learning and language development based on the argument that students achieve ease in using a language when their attention is focused on receiving and conveying authentic messages; the messages which are of mutual importance and interest in a communicative situation. Additional studies have also indicated that CL positively affects learning at higher cognitive levels. Comprehensive analyses of Liao’s (2005) doctoral study concluded that CL positively affected the students’ learning at higher cognitive levels.

Sengsouliya, Soukhavong, Silavong, Sengsouliya, & Littlepage’s (2020) study on the factors predicting high school’s academic engagement found that, “Teacher and peer interaction are the most powerful factors predicting their academic engagement.” (p. 124). The students of this study were found to be more engaged in learning when teachers provided opportunities to have discussion with peers. Lam and Muldner’s (2017) study, conducted on manipulating CE in prepare-to-collaborate kind of tasks and the effect on learning proposes that a cognitively engaging preparation phase is likely to lead to better learning because it provides students encouragement to collaborate constructively.

Methods

Further observation reveals that more studies are conducted on the university and college students focused on the investigation of motivational aspects such as beliefs, self-regulation, personal and environmental influences, etc. (Graham & Golan, 1991; Anderson & Reder, 1979; Bryan, Glynn & Kittleson, 2011; Husman & Lens, 1999; Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Glynn, et al, 2011; Pintrich, 2004; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Nolen, 2003). It is observed that, lesser number of studies are conducted on students’ CL and CE in the context
of vital pedagogical issues and considerations (Herrmann, 2013; Azevedo, Moos, Johnson, & Chauncey (2010); Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012; Dinsmore & Alexzander, 2012; Entwistle & Entwistle, 1970; Ravindran, Greene, & DeBacer, 2005). Further observation indicates that most of these studies are conducted on students of Mathematics and Sciences; and studies conducted on the students of Humanities are somewhat limited.

After an extensive search of studies on CL and students’ CE, no studies, conducted on education students, are found. Furthermore, it is observed that no study on CL and students’ CE has been conducted in Omani context thus far, which has paved the scope for the present study.

Research Design and Methodology

After establishing the research territory of the Interface between CL and CE, by reviewing previous researches, the researchers of this study identified a niche by examining the emerging gaps in the previous studies and decided to determine “Cooperative Learning and Cognitive Engagement in Omani Context” as a field of investigation of this study. Drawing desired focus and direction, this study aims to examine the Effects of CL on Students’ CE and Task Achievement on year 1 undergraduate B. Ed. students of Dhofar University belonging to the academic year 2019-20. A quasi-experimental research design is used to measure the effects of the intervention on the experimental group. Data was collected using classroom observation checklist before and after the implementation of the intervention using descriptive procedures for analysis. In addition, a five-point Likert Scale quantitative questionnaire was administered on 120 students to investigate their level of awareness of cognitive engagement skills required during in-class learning sessions. Thus, the quantitative method of collecting and analyzing data is used to prove as to what extent CL enhanced CE of the target learners and the observation checklist data, before and after the intervention, is used to learn and find out if CL has been instrumental in enhancing the students’ CL or not.

Participants

The total population in this study is 156 undergraduate B. Ed. students. We have used “purposive sampling technique” as a non-probability sampling technique in which all the participants of the study share the same background characteristics (Crossman, 2020). The sample size for the current study equals the total population of the B. Ed. program undergraduate students studying in the Department of Education of Dhofar University. The questionnaire was distributed to 120 students to investigate their awareness of CE skills required for effective learning sessions. Remaining 36 students were assigned to two study groups. Group one was determined to be the experimental group consisting of eight female students and 12 male students. Group two consisting of seven female students and nine male students was considered to remain as control group. The students who participated in this study were in their second semester (Spring 2019-20), and all of them came from same educational background. Homogeneity and equivalency tests were conducted on the target sample of the experimental group to rule out the possibility of any major individual differences between the students which might affect the desired validity and reliability of the results of the study.
Research Instruments
In the current study, the researchers have used two research instruments, which are: (a) a quantitative questionnaire, and (b) a classroom observation checklist. The questionnaire consisting of 15 items was administered on 120 students to investigate their awareness of CE skills required for effective learning in the class sessions. In addition, a classroom observation checklist was used to measure the effects of applying the strategies of CL on the students’ CE. This research tool allowed the researchers to find out students’ differences related to the application of CL strategies required for effective learning. The observation checklist was adapted based on the early work of Nolen, 1988; Nolen and Haladyna, 1990a, 1990b; Greene and Miller, 1996; and Miller, et al, 1996. The fifteen items in the questionnaire of the current study were conducted using a five-point Likert scale to measure the effects of CL on students’ CE.

Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments
The researchers have used Cronbach’s alpha measurement to ascertain the reliability coefficient required of each item of the questionnaire in the pilot study. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.821, which is an appropriate coefficient as a minimum representative benchmark, according to Hair, et al., 1995, i.e., between 0.60 and 0.70.

Content validity, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), is another important indicator of instrument validation which has been achieved by getting the observation checklist reviewed by experienced and competent faculty members who are familiar with the content knowledge of the course taught to the two groups. This observation checklist was reviewed by seven competent faculty members from the Department of Education and Department of English Language and Literature of Dhofar University to ensure the maximum validity of the instrument. The checklist was subjected to required modifications based on the feedback received from the seven reviewers. Before conducting classroom observations, the researchers had two trials of classroom observation of the students other than the two groups of the current study which was followed by detailed discussions to improve upon the ambiguous items in the checklist. After this, the researchers examined the checklist for its inter-rater reliability. The inter-rater reliability coefficient was r = 0.90, which suggests that the collected data and the scores are reliable.

In this study, the researchers have conducted Exploratory Factor Analysis to ensure required validity of the questionnaire to be answered by 90 neutral undergraduate students other than the students included in the sample of the real (experimental) study. These pilot study students belonged to College of Arts and Applied Sciences of Dhofar University. The completed questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS 11.0 version. Applying the Principal Component Method, Factor Analysis has been conducted by the researchers to ensure a higher construct validity of the questionnaire. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found at 0.72, which is more than 0.5, which establishes the appropriateness of the sample size. In addition, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity value was 0.001, which is at the significant level of (0.01), which clearly indicates that at least two items are correlated. After the application of the Varimax Rotation method on the 15 items, three factors needed to be revised based on the results that emerged from the Factor Analysis. In addition, the
ethical considerations and required measures involved in this data-driven scientific research were duly followed and adhered to.

**Homogeneity and Equivalency Test**

For testing the level of homogeneity and the equivalency of the two groups before the actual intervention period, the participants’ English Language Achievement Score (ELAS) at the Foundation Program Level and their total grade point average (TGPA) at their Higher Secondary School Examination level were analyzed using t-test to find out the differences of the afore-mentioned external variables between the two groups.

Table one below shows the differences of the significance level between the two groups of participants related to the two external variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Variables</th>
<th>Control Group N=18</th>
<th>Experimental Group N=18</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELAS</td>
<td>78.30</td>
<td>9.65</td>
<td>78.73</td>
<td>9.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGPA</td>
<td>71.78</td>
<td>66.34</td>
<td>71.73</td>
<td>60.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one above highlights the significance of differences related to the external variables for the control group and the experimental group. The t-values of ELAS t = -0.03 and TGPA t = 0.18 are both below the level of significance which suggests that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group. The mean score of the ELAS test is at 78.30 for the control group and 78.73 for the experimental group with the standard deviations of 9.65 and 9.89 respectively. Similarly, the TGPA of the control group was 71.78 and of the experimental group 71.73 with the standard deviations of 66.34 and 60.81 respectively. This shows that, prior to the beginning of the experimental intervention, the two groups were equal in relation to above-mentioned test scores.

**The Intervention**

The participants in the control group and the experimental group were made to use and study the same course syllabus and teaching-learning materials prescribed by the University. The students regularly met twice a week and studied with the teacher for fifteen weeks in a class session of one hour and 15 minutes each. The control group was taught using the normal lecturing mode; whereas, the experimental group was taught in the framework of CL and CE. In this framework the teachers are subjected to plan and organize interactive tasks and activities that are suitable to activate the process of interaction and elaborate and sustain students’ engagement throughout the lesson.

Preceding discussion of research design and methodology, used in this study, leads to the presentation of the data and discussion of results, which is presented in the following section. This data has been presented separately for each research question of the study.

**Findings**

*Data and results related to RQ1: To what extent B. Ed. Students are aware of cognitive engagement strategies required for effective learning sessions?*
The following table contains data and results related to CE levels of students.

Table 2. Levels of students’ CE (N=120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Weighted mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>CE Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Category 1: General interaction with the teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher introduces the topic of the task.</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher explains the context of the target topic.</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students interact with the teacher for further clarifications.</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students understand their roles and responsibilities to process the task.</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students take notes while listening to the teacher.</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.35</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Category 2: Engaging in class discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Students ask their peers in the group for further clarifications.</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Students use their notes to process the task.</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Students exchange their ideas between group members.</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Students complete peer utterances.</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Students justify their arguments.</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.14</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Category 3: Engaging in group discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Students make gestures while listening to discussions.</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students make evaluative comments.</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Students give directions during discussion.</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Students give further explanations.</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Students are focused and active listeners.</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.11</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall Cognitive Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.20</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.64</strong></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table represents the levels of students’ cognitive engagement related to the results of the questionnaire distributed prior to the experimental stage. The weighted mean, standard deviation, and cognitive engagement level are shown in this table. As can be seen in the above table, the overall mean score of EFL students’ CE level was 2.20 with a standard deviation of 0.64, which is counted as low level. The total mean score of the three categories of CE Level ranged between 2.11 to 2.35 with a standard deviation ranging between 0.75 to 0.82, which reflects a low level of students’ cognitive engagement. The narrow range of the mean scores and standard deviations in the three domains indicate that the study sample, in approximate terms, is a homogenous group in view of the low level of students’ awareness of cognitive engagement skills and related strategies.

**Data and results related to RQ2 at the pre-intervention stage:** Whether there are any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students’ responses taught through cooperative learning strategies and those taught in a normal setting?

The following table shows the data and results related to the significance of differences between mean scores of students’ responses taught through CL strategies and those taught in a normal setting at the pre-intervention stage.
Table 3. Significance of differences in CEL between the two groups in the pre-intervention Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Control group (N = 18)</th>
<th>Experimental group (N = 18)</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General interaction with the teacher</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in class discussion</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in group discussion</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cognitive Engagement</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows the statistics relevant to the results of pre-intervention stage collected through the classroom observation checklist for both the control group and experimental group. The results of t-test and its t-value and significance value are also highlighted. As evident, the total mean of the control group in the three categories of CE is 2.01 with the standard deviation of 0.59, and the total mean of experimental group in the three categories of CE is 1.99 with the standard deviation of 0.60. This result, at the level of <0.05 between mean scores of B. Ed. students’ CE responses who were taught through CL and those taught in a normal setting, suggests that there are no statistically significant differences between the participants of the two groups.

Data and results related to RQ2 at the post-intervention stage: Whether there are any statistically significant differences between mean scores of students’ responses taught through cooperative learning strategies and those taught in a normal setting?

The following table shows the data and results related to the significance of differences in CEL between the two groups in the post-intervention stage.

Table 4. Significance of differences in cognitive engagement scores between the two groups in the post-intervention stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Control group (N = 18)</th>
<th>Experimental group (N = 18)</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General interaction with the teacher</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in class discussion</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in group discussion</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows the results of post-intervention stage data collected through classroom observation checklist for both the control group and experimental group. The results of t-test in terms of t-value and significance value are also included. As evident, the total mean of the control group in the three categories of CE is 2.58 with a standard deviation of 0.73, and the total mean of experimental group in the three categories of CE is 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.15. This result suggests that there are statistically significant differences at the level of <0.01 between mean scores of B. Ed. students’ CE responses who were taught through CL and those taught in a normal setting. Evidently, the mean score of the experimental group has almost doubled (4.25) as compared to the control group’s score (2.58) at the end of the intervention stage as a result of significant development and growth of students’ cognitive skills and competence.

**Data and results related to RQ3:** Whether there are any significant differences among undergraduate B. Ed. students’ CE levels attributed to their gender?

The following table shows the data and results related to the significance of differences in CE responses between the students in the experimental group in the post-intervention stage attributed to their gender.

**Table 5. Significance of differences in cognitive engagement scores between students in the experimental group in the Post-Intervention Stage attributed to their gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Male (N= 7)</th>
<th>Female (N= 11)</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean Std. Dev.</td>
<td>Mean Std. Dev.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General interaction with the teacher</td>
<td>4.22 0.31</td>
<td>4.35 0.25</td>
<td>-0.87</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in class discussion</td>
<td>4.37 0.37</td>
<td>4.20 0.38</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in group discussion</td>
<td>4.11 0.40</td>
<td>4.22 0.33</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cognitive Engagement</td>
<td>4.24 0.17</td>
<td>4.25 0.15</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows the post-intervention stage statistical results generated from the data collected from classroom observation checklist for students in the experimental group attributed to their gender. The results of t-test are also highlighted in terms of t-value and significance value. As evident, the total mean of the male group in the three categories of CE is 4.24 with a standard deviation of 0.17, and the total mean score of the female group in the three categories of CE is 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.15. This result indicates that there is no statistically significant difference at the level of <0.05 between mean scores of male and female B. Ed. students’ CE responses in the post-intervention stage. It is obvious from the above results that the participation and engagement of both male and female students during the intervention stage was almost the same, and also the effects and intended outcomes of the intervention program were also almost the same. This result is a clear indicator that the intervention plan, procedures followed, tasks and activities involved, and their implementation over a period of one semester delivered desired effective results.
Discussion of Results

The results of the pre-intervention questionnaire, administered on the total sample size of 120 students, in response to RQ1, suggest that the students’ awareness of CL and CE strategies were at a considerably low level. This result also corresponds with the pre-observation phase checklist results of both study groups which was also at a low level. In the beginning of the intervention phase, the experimental group students were reluctant and were not being able to use the CL and CE strategies effectively while attempting the target group tasks. However, in response to RQ2 related to the intervention during the initial phase of the study, the students’ awareness of CL strategies and their role in the effective learning were raised, which includes note taking, exchanging ideas, asking for clarifications, developing interactive arguments, and justifying arguments between group members. This exercise enhanced their level of enthusiasm and participation in the group tasks, which is reflective of Greene and millers’ (1996) finding that motivation variable is directly associated with CE, which has a positive influence and effect on the learning outcomes. Based on the social-constructivist approach adopted with the experimental group, the students started gradually developing, using, and internalizing relevant strategies of CL and CE, which is consistent with the results of Liao’s (2005) doctoral study and Panday’s (2017) research on the effects of CL on the students’ CE. Other supporting research studies include Liao’s study, which establishes the fact that CL promoted and strengthened the experimental group learners’ use of the learning strategies than those in the whole-class group and Panday’s (2017) study shows a significant growth in the students’ ability to build up deep thinking in terms of using CL and CE strategies, which corresponds favorably with the skills and strategies developed by the participants of the current study. On the other hand, the same result of the current study is in partial disagreement with Herrmann’s (2013) quasi-experimental study, which concluded that CL only enhanced the level of activeness and did not increase the level of knowledge engagement significantly.

In line with Johnson’ and Johnson’s (2018) argument, the researchers of this study, based on the positive results of RQ2, are of the view that thinking can be adjusted and applied through various techniques at different stages of comprehension in order to raise the level of CE based on the positive results of the study. This is due to the fact, as argued by Johnson and Johnson (2018), that there are useful cognitive activities and effective interpersonal dynamics that can only materialize into fruitful results when students promote each other’s learning, as happened in the CE achievements of the participants of this study, which confirms Jenkin’s (2004) argument that all human identities are social identities in a manner of meaning and meaning always involves interaction. The results of RQ 2 of this study also support the Vygotskian premise (1978) that knowledge is collaboratively constructed through social interactions when individuals are engaged with one another in the learning process. The significant results relevant to RQ 2, achieved by the participants of this study, also find support from and lend confirmation to the findings of Costley’s (2021) study, which claimed that the degree of collaboration that a student engages with positively affects the germane load, which refers to mental effort that a student devotes to retaining information and generating schemata of the target knowledge to be acquired.

Another outcome of this study, related to RQ 3 on gender differences, suggests that no statistically significant differences were found at the level <0.05 between mean scores of students’ CE from the post-classroom observation checklist results. A comparative perspective of
Research findings on gender differences suggest that in Sani and Hashim’s (2016) study on school students from grades 7-11, male students demonstrated deep engagement whereas female students, comparatively, showed shallow engagement. Whereas, Pagar’s (2016) study, conducted on the same age group of students, indicates that the female students’ engagement turned out to be slightly higher than the male students. However, the current study found no significant differences between the male and the female students. This finding could be linked with the maturity of age, university study culture, and spirit and willingness of task completion with the sense of equal responsibility and more so being B. Ed. students, the participants in the experimental group of this study, seem to have comparatively higher motivational drive than the students from other majors as they are targeting to take up more responsible teaching career in future.

**Conclusion**

This study has examined (i) the extent to which B. Ed. undergraduate students are aware of CE skills required for effective learning sessions related to (RQ1); (ii) whether there are any significant differences between the students’ cognitive skills achievement in the experimental group and control group relevant to (RQ2); and (iii) whether there are any gender-based differences on students’ CE achievements, related to (RQ3).

The findings of the data results related to RQ1 of the study suggested that the overall level of students’ CE skills awareness was at 2.20, which is counted as a low level of awareness. The findings of the data results relevant to RQ2 confirm that significant differences were evident in the cognitive skills achievement of students in the experimental group and control group. Post-intervention results showed that the cumulative score of CE achievement for the experimental group was at 4.25 as compared to the achievement of the control group staying lower at 2.58. Evidently, the experimental group’s achievement is almost double in comparison to the control group as a result of systematically planned and implemented intervention. However, the findings of the data results for RQ 3 did not show any significant differences in the participants’ cognitive achievement of the experimental group based on gender lines.

**Implications of the Findings and Limitations**

Thus, the findings of the current study, by way of its pedagogical implications, establish a strong argument in favor of a paradigm shift from normal lecture-based classroom teaching method to a more dialogic and discursive teaching-learning approach in a social constructivist framework in order for students to engage in deeper stimulating learning processes and experiences. More specific implications of the findings certainly emerge for the teachers, students, materials designers and policy makers. The teachers need to plan their lessons in an integrated and interactive frame, design and exploit creative and innovative problem-based tasks and activities to engage the learners, and to promote higher order critical thinking in the classrooms. Students need to frequently avail opportunities of interaction and discussion in the classroom. Policy makers in the institutions need to provide teachers with a considerable degree of autonomy to explore, create, and use authentic materials along with the prescribed text book(s) in order to maximize active learning and ensure effective CE of the learners.

In terms of the limitations of this study and more focused scope for further research, the need to investigate CE of the learners in relation to specific aspects of language learning such as
academic writing, reading, speaking, and listening could be undertaken. CE studies can also be conducted in relation to and also in contrast with a certain methodology of teaching such as “students’ cognitive engagement through communicative language teaching method or through task-based method of teaching” or contrastive studies such as “students’ cognitive engagement through grammar translation method of teaching versus cognitive engagement through task-based method of teaching”. CE can also be investigated in product-based approach to teaching language skills in contrast with process-based approach to teaching language skills. Furthermore, investigations on group work and how the dynamics of the group change over a period of time will deepen more focused understanding of student-to-student interactions and their contributions can also be a fertile area of research.

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Kostoulas-Makrakis, N. & Makrakis, V. (2020). Developing student-driven learning activities to promote refugee quality education through the CARE methodology. *Int. J. Early Years Educ.*, 28 (2), 176-188.


Abstract:
The recent pandemic has forced the educational sector to unwillingly reform its strategies by compelling it to embrace technology as the savior of the educational process. COVID-19 has adversely affected this sector by forcing a halt to all face-to-face learning in educational institutes, which led to dependence solely on online education and adopting strategies fit solely to distant learning. Thus, this paper has focused on the English language learning strategies adopted during Covid-19. Moreover, this research aims to provide the latest information about online teaching strategies adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic by English language instructors in Asia, especially in Middle Eastern countries. This study is qualitative in nature and utilizes the systematic literature review approach. The data for this research was gathered from renowned databases to maintain reliability. The results highlighted that among many strategies, three are most important in teaching the English language during COVID-19, first is collaborative learning (i.e., breakout classes, cloud-based collaboration), the second is flipped classroom, and the final is scaffolding. In the end, the study concluded with the recommendation as the findings of this research can help policymakers and educationists in developing effective or efficient strategies for tackling tough situations or pandemics.

Keywords: collaborative learning, covid-19, English language strategies, online teaching, pandemics

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Introduction

The lockdown due to pandemics has forced the closure of businesses and other activities. Similarly, it also affected the educational sector (Toquero, 2020; Zhu & Liu, 2020) because education presumably seemed impossible without student-teacher face-to-face interaction (Pustika, 2020). Rido and Sari (2018) highlighted that the effectiveness of learning, especially language learning, depends upon the dual interaction of students and teachers and active physical participation. However, the lockdown has imposed online e-learning on all. The learning process by adopting the internet and utilizing technology is known as online learning (Fry, 2001), which has two types, one is synchronous online learning, and the other is asynchronous online learning. The utilization of each of these depends upon the effectiveness, efficiency, and abilities of the institute and its instructors (Hrastinski, 2008). The COVID-19 lockdown situation has shifted the entire learning system to online learning, distance learning, e-learning, or flexible learning (Tanveer, Bhaumik, Hassan & Haq, 2020). Similarly, educational institutes in Asia and particularly in Saudi Arabia and many other gulf countries, have also shifted to online teaching (Alshehri, Mordhah, Alsibiani, Alsobhi, & Alnazzawi, 2020). The institutes that tried to continue the physical education of language were also shut due to sudden spread (Al-Nofaie, 2020). Even though it is difficult to teach any language online or virtually, the pandemic has forced the institutions in Saudi Arabia to adopt it (Almekhlafy, 2020). Thus, in Saudi Arabia and other parts of Asia, the adoption of e-learning has become the new regulation, and technology has emerged as the primary need (Hoq, 2020) and a beacon of hope for the continuity of education. This era of technology has made children digital natives and created ease for humans, especially there is much need for education (Oktaviani & Desiarti, 2017).

Nowadays, technology is helping students in English language learning via online learning. Some researchers attest that some students now prefer the online mode over the physical one due to ease of learning (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). Simply described, E-learning is actually an education or training that is delivered electronically (Li, Lau & Dharmendran, 2009). It enhances students learning through the use of any appropriate information and communication technologies (Ellis, Ginns, & Piggott, 2009) and can involve Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Blackboard and Moodle. Moreover, it can also include video conferencing tools like Skype and Zoom as well as mobile applications (Telegram and WhatsApp, etc.). These technologies comprise both synchronous (e.g., chatrooms and Listservs) and asynchronous (e.g., e-mails, discussion boards) modes of communication in providing education (Layali & Al-Shlowiy, 2020).

In the context of Saudi Arabia, the implementation of e-learning is really a unique and progressive approach because of technological advancement in the majority of countries. However, still being a vast country, many cities or specific areas do not have the basic technological need or proper coverage (i.e., internet connection). The students, even the teachers, are facing a lack of resources and knowledge of the adoption of teaching applications or methods (Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh & Althunibat, 2020). Thus, to ensure the smooth flow of online education, English language teachers should be provided with “continuous teacher professional development (CTPD)” in using the online pedagogies (Hulon, Tucker & Green, 2020; Williams, Schroer, Gull, Miller & Axelson, 2020) and many such other strategies can be adopted by teachers to facilitate the teaching process in this pandemic. Spiceland, Spiceland, and Schaeffer (2015) explained that the strategy of course redesigning is the most effective way for the course
instructor to deliver lectures online and enable him/her to integrate technology into the online courses. This strategy helps in teaching and increases the chances of student retention. Furthermore, redesigning the course and aligning it with principles of andragogy can assist the usage of interactive learning in the online environment with the help of multimedia tools (Twigg, 2003).

Similarly, Yarrow, Masood, and Afkar (2020) highlighted that the effect of the pandemic on education could be mitigated by online learning. Therefore, it is important to analyze the major issues which can be a barrier to online learning, as online English learning is a barrier for EFL learners in general and Saudis in particular because it is not their first language. Khan (2016) explored whether e-learning in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching in Saudi Arabia can be beneficial to students and even teachers if all the resources for online classes are available. Zakarneh (2018) also highlighted that Arab students favor online English learning and consider it the best way to improve their English language proficiency. In addition, the teachers also believe teaching the English language online is more beneficial (Pustika, 2020). Prior studies in the context of Saudi Arabia have focused a lot on teaching English online during COVID-19 but ignored the strategies adopted for online teaching. Therefore, this research has not only revealed the literal aspect of online learning or teaching in the pandemic but also highlighted the most commonly used strategies for learning by students (EFL students) and teaching by language instructors in the context of Asia. Especially, the focus will be on Middle East countries, i.e., Saudi Arabia. The emphasis of the study is on the latest research area of learning strategies during COVID-19 and deeply analyzed the literature.

Research problem:
As the pandemic has shut the educational institutes and worsened everything, it is extremely important to analyze the strategies adopted by education institutions and recommend the best methods for future implementations.

The rational and significance:
It is known that student performance, satisfaction, and course outcomes depend on the teaching and learning strategies. The Covid-19 situation has greatly influenced the teaching modes, forcing the teacher to change their strategies. This study has directed the attention towards online or e-learning and provided strategies that can help restore the educational loss due to Covid-19/pandemic. Although various empirical (qualitative and quantitative) studies have been conducted in the past, no studies have conducted a comprehensive systematic literature review, especially regarding online teaching and learning strategies adopted in EFL classes during Covid-19. Therefore, this study is the first in this area and expanded the literature on COVID-19, learning strategies, teaching strategies, and technology adoption during the era of COVID in the context of Asia and Middle East counties.

Research question(s)
1) What are the teaching strategies adopted by educational institutions during the pandemic/Covid-19?
2) What are the teaching and learning strategies adopted in the English language classes/EFL classes?
3) What are the learning, teaching strategies, and technology adoption During Covid-19 in EFL classes in the context of Asia and Middle East countries?
Objectives:
This study aims to provide the latest information about teaching and learning strategies adopted during Covid-19 in EFL classes and point out the best strategies for policymakers and educationists so that they can develop an effective or efficient strategy.

Literature Review
There are various forms of teaching and learning strategies, but the pandemic has changed the shift from offline to completely online teaching which includes blended learning, collaborative learning, flipped classroom strategy, breakout classes and scaffolding (Hakim, 2020; Ahmad, 2020). According to Ria (2021), strategy is a way, tactic, or method of accomplishing something; in this scenario, it is teaching students to achieve their learning objectives. According to Lederman (2020), COVID-19 has inclined both students as well as teachers to embrace the digital experience of academics, even though there are many constraints in the implementation of online teaching and learning (i.e., internet connection, lack of access to learning tools) (Agung & OP, 2020). A study reported that students expressed a positive opinion about the effectiveness of online education during the pandemic (Yildiz, Cengel, & Alkan, 2020). Further research examined the significance of online education and analyzed the flaws, qualities, difficulties, and possibilities associated with online education during the global epidemic (Mahyoob, 2020). The report also offers some recommendations for addressing online learning challenges during natural catastrophes and epidemics.

A study evaluated the stress caused by online learning among Saudi university students during the COVID-19 pandemic, examining students at King Saud University. They observed that most of the student students were experiencing extreme stress and anxiety as a result of the abrupt transition from traditional face-to-face classes to online classes. On the other hand, Bao (2020) noted that online courses’ success is highly dependent on detailed course design, attractive and interactive teaching materials, including multimedia content. Wolfinger (2016) concentrated on achieving fully online virtual schooling through the middle school years. The findings indicated that teachers play a critical role in virtual learning and also reported that parental involvement could help children achieve academic success. According to Sun and Chen (2016), online teaching needs to cultivate a sense of community; however, it is a significantly challenging task. They emphasized that student participation, interaction, and collaboration could play a critical role in teaching. Therefore, they concluded that both students and learners should make a joint effort and construct an interactive and collaborative environment for effective online learning.

In addition, according to Alasmari (2021), the challenges faced by EFL students can worsen since English is not their first language. Given the challenges encountered by teachers and students due to the abrupt transition from traditional to online classes, innovative and creative teaching in online classes is more essential now than before due to Covid-19, an increasing number of studies tried to evaluate the teaching strategies, either quantitative or qualitative, but none have analyzed the results through literature review. Therefore, this study aims to provide information about the latest and most effective strategies that can help researchers, teachers, and educationists ineffective teaching.
Methodology

Generally, there are two types of research, one is qualitative, and the other is quantitative. According to Slevitch (2011), quantitative research is primarily concerned with numbers and figures. It is used to quantify attitudes, behaviors, and other defined variables with the goal of confirming or refuting hypotheses about a particular phenomenon and possibly contextualizing the study sample's findings in a larger population (or specific groups) (Park & Park, 2016). Since quantitative research clearly outlines what will be assessed and how it will be measured, it is considered much more structured than qualitative data collection and uncovering patterns in behavior, motivation, emotion, and cognition. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is mostly used in exploratory research. It is generally utilized to obtain a deeper understanding of individual experiences, thoughts, attitudes, and trends. A qualitative researcher's data gathering toolkit is quite diverse, spanning from entirely unstructured to semi-structured techniques. In this study, the exploratory research design was utilized, and the literature analysis method was applied.

Every qualitative research is based on different/specific concepts (Duffy & Chenail, 2009). Hence, this study is based on a special category known as a systematic literature review. Many researchers conclude that systematic literature research is entirely different or opposite from empirical research. The systematic review of the literature supports the subjectivist/interpretivist paradigm primarily on the basis of research paradigms (Campbell, 2014). In contrast to empirical research, it does not test hypotheses or develop theories. Additionally, it distinguishes itself from interpretive strategies such as focus groups, ethnography, as well as interviews. The systematic literature review is written based on the evidence and concepts provided in the literature.

Data Collection and Search Strategy

In order to execute this systematic review, a systematic search of current and prevalent literature was performed by carrying out a detailed search of electronic databases like; Scopus, Ebsco Host, Web of Science. The articles cited in this study were taken from renowned journals which were indexed in Scopus (q1, q2, and q3) and web of science (SSCI, SCI, and ESCI). These databases are mentioned below in detail (Table one):

Table 1. Databases for Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Databases</th>
<th>Contextual Database</th>
<th>Literature Database</th>
<th>Web of Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publishers</td>
<td>Scopus</td>
<td>Emerald</td>
<td>Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cogent</td>
<td>Elsevier</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IGI Global</td>
<td>Oxford Publishers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The goal of this search was to find studies that took place between 2019 and 2021. After identifying appropriate research/review papers and eliminating any duplicates, the remaining papers were thoroughly examined. All the irrelevant articles were also eliminated. Furthermore, abstracts from any remaining research papers were thoroughly examined to ensure that all
assimilated papers met the objectives of this current study and to identify any additional papers that could be excluded from this review. In the end, whatever was left after the filtering of the assimilated papers was eventually taken in its full context.

The current review synthesizes the studies collected using the qualitative synthesis approach. According to Stenbacka (2001), the validity of qualitative research has several issues and is also difficult to predict. As a result, the collected data was taken from reliable sources in order to maintain the research’s reliability and validity. Furthermore, the data for this study was gathered from the literature, which is referred to as secondary data. As a result, the collected data was linked to the scope of this systematic literature review. Figure one, given below, reveals the process of data collection (Liberati et al., 2009).

Figure 1. Procedure for Data Collection

Study Selection

All duplicate studies were removed from the list of studies that had been identified and gathered. Afterwards, the titles of the studies and the abstracts were examined to see if the papers found were relevant or not. Moreover, reference lists from previously identified studies were scanned sparingly to find any additional relevant studies with similar objectives. Finally, the peer-reviewed papers that were eventually selected were read carefully by the researcher (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An & Dearden, 2018).

Inclusion Criteria

- Latest studies were considered (From 2019-2021).
- Studies that have been conducted with a methodology that were either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodology were included.
- Studies across developing and developed countries were considered.
- Studies that were relevant with regards to English language teaching, learning in COVID-19, English teaching strategies in COVID-19, and teaching strategies when teaching online were taken into consideration for this review.
- The majority of studies focusing on Middle East countries and Saudi Arabia were considered.
The study focusing on Asian countries were also considered.

The studies published in the English language were included for this review.

**Exclusion Criteria**
- Old studies were not included.
- Similar studies were excluded.
- The studies published in other than the English language were not considered.

**Code of Conduct**
In any research project, the code of conduct is the first area of action. This is extensively used as a guide in professional communities to verify the criteria for what is good. The scientific community has established ethical guidelines that must be followed in any research effort and have a social influence (Farisco, Evers & Salles, 2019). The research must contribute to the advancement of society by demonstrating a viable solution to an existing problem. The communities' code of conduct assists in defining the expectations for research outcomes. This research adhered strictly to the code of conduct. All data were compiled from reliable sources of literature.

**Results/Findings**
Extensive research within electronic databases was carried out, and all the duplicate studies were identified and excluded. Moreover, the irrelevant studies were excluded. The remaining studies were included in this systematic review. The details of total studies included and excluded is given in figure 2.

![Figure 2. Details of studies (Included and Excluded)](image-url)
Overall, different teaching and learning strategies have been adopted in Asia and more specifically Middle Eastern countries for effective English language teaching in the era of COVID-19. These strategies are discussed below.

**Discussion:**

Amid the rise of COVID-19, educational systems and teaching strategies were shifted from face-to-face to online. Collaborative and cooperative learning/teaching strategies are among the most important methods. Collaborative learning is a type of learning that is based on social activities and simulates students' active participation in their studies (Abulhassan & Hamid, 2021). Group activities are learning practices that are utilized in both cooperative and collaborative learning, in which learners participate as co-learners. Group activities also cover a wide range of activities, from collaborative and cooperative group activities to peer tutoring (Chen, 2018). In the case of online EFL classes, collaborative tools are applications that are used to improve the quality of online teaching and learning. Generally, collaboration is a process in which students work in pairs or groups and collaborate to achieve a task by brainstorming, listening to peers, and sharing of ideas. Such activities demanded teachers' guidance and communication between students in order to accomplish the lesson's objectives (Rashid, Yunus & Wahi, 2019).

In the Covid-19 scenario, Ahmad (2020) checked the effect of online cloud-based collaborative writing on the EFL student's writings in a Saudi university. The study involved 21 tertiary EFL students. Prior to treatment, the students were pre-tested in both the quantity and quality of their writing. Then, they were subjected to cloud-based collaborative writing practice for a whole semester before being post-tested on both criteria. All the participants (students) were asked to use Google Docs to write weekly essays. Students were divided into small groups and assigned to write their own essays in collaboration. Google Docs was selected because it allows synchronous and asynchronous communication and modification on one or more documents by several writers regardless of location. The result of this study showed that online collaborative writing is effective in improving the quality and quantity of English writing by EFL students. In addition, the majority of students were satisfied using this method as an effective learning strategy (Ahmad, 2020). However, this study only focused on English writing and completely ignored the reading and speaking context for EFL students. Moreover, the focus of the study was students from Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Badr (2020) studies the effect of online collaborative learning on EFL students (focusing on speaking skills). This study included 25 university students (From Egypt), and the result was included based on the pre-posttest. The result revealed that online collaborative learning significantly enhances the English learning skills of the students. Moreover, it also helped to reduce the English-speaking anxiety level of the students. Nevertheless, the scope of the study was limited to first-year English department Egyptian university students and did not study the anxiety level as the students’ progress in their academic years. On the other hand, Kanno (2020) checked the effectiveness of an online collaborative teaching strategy in a Japanese university EFL student’s context. The researcher used online collaborative platforms (i.e., Slack, Microsoft Team) to evaluate the impact of this strategy. To this end, 94 students participated in online collaborative classes, and they were also involved in group discussion sessions. Through after-classes discussion, it was revealed that collaborative learning enhanced student engagement and improved EFL learning. This study's
main drawback was the absence of precise data collection methods such as quantitative analysis of categorized online responses, structured questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews.

Similarly, collaborative and synchronized online discussion as a teaching strategy for EFL students was employed by researchers in Indonesia (Rinekso & Muslim, 2020). In this research 5 university students participated in collaborative-based classes in which synchronized online discussions were also included. The data were collected through virtual observations (participatory) and virtual semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that students responded positively and believed that this teaching strategy was an effective style of online instruction because it facilitated task negotiation, exchange of opinions, and task planning. However, the target of this study was only Indonesian students.

Similarly, another interesting collaborative learning strategy, known as online breakout room, has been explored by researchers for EFL students. Saltz and Heckman (2020) defined breakout room as a type of collaborative peer learning in which students work in small groups synchronously. Such activities can be easily held through online applications (i.e., Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet). Therefore, EFL teachers can also use breakout rooms in online classes. In such strategies, students may utilize language constructively, produce meaningful output, and communicate with other students. Within a session, students can be divided into small groups or pairs to engage in spoken language practice, debates, role-playing, and group tasks, while also inviting the teacher to participate. Since teachers can provide opportunities for children to build peer connections without fear of making grammatical errors in their language use, so, this method assists in strengthening their second language acquisition skills (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020). In Bahrain, Bamidele (2021) studied the utilization of online breakout rooms in EFL classes of a university. In this study, the researcher used primarily quantitative analysis through the use of a small number of survey questions (32 participants) and qualitative analysis (three participants) through the use of semi-guided interviews conducted during online classes. As a result, the study concluded that students were able to perform more efficiently, increased students’ engagement in learning, and made EFL classes more interactive. Additionally, students also found the use of online breakout classes quite exciting and thought of it as an innovative learning strategy. In another study, Lee (2021) also employed the Zoom breakout rooms for EFL students in South Korea. A total of 25 university students participated in this study, in which data collection was comprised of open-ended survey, a focus group as well as individual interviews. According to the findings of this study, the majority of students were satisfied with the use of Zoom breakout rooms in EFL classes. The study also highlighted that breakout room provides an environment for students to engage in practical communication activities that may be difficult to achieve in the main online classes, particularly if the class is large. Yet, this research evaluated students enrolled in a single South Korean university, and the number of the sample was small to draw generalizable conclusions.

Due to the rising implications of online classes, the concept of flipped classrooms has also grabbed attention as an alternative teaching strategy. In a traditional classroom, new knowledge is taught in class through lectures, and students practice it at home via homework. On the contrary, in the flipped classroom, students receive information before the class via technology (Alsmari, 2020; Kurt, 2017). In this approach, the teacher distributes video recordings of the classes to EFL students so they can watch them at home and gain a better
understanding of the topic. They could watch the video indefinitely until they learned the concept. The students then do the assigned work and activities in class (i.e., online) alongside their peers and the teacher. Therefore, the teacher serves as a guide, encouraging learners to become active participants. Using this technique, practices that are typically conducted in class are transformed into home activities delivered with the help of technology (Wu, Hsieh, & Yang, 2017). In Saudi Arabia, Chatta and Haque (2020) conducted a study to check the effectiveness of flipped classrooms on EFL students of the university. This study divided students into two groups. In the first group, 32 students were taught using traditional methods, whereas in the second group, 31 students were taught using flipped classrooms. The study used a mixed-method research design to collect data. This included a combination of several tools such as pre and post-tests, a questionnaire, and a group discussion (conducted only for the experimental group). The study found that flipped instruction method enhanced the students' writing skills. It also revealed that teachers and students had a positive attitude towards using this tool. However, this study was limited on improving the students’ paragraph writing skills (Chatta & Haque, 2020). Similarly, Alsmari’s (2020) study also highlighted the effectiveness of flipped classrooms for EFL learners and mentioned that such teaching strategies could enhance the learning skills of students. This study involved a total of 100 students, 50 of whom were assigned to the flipped teaching group, and the other 50 were assigned to the traditional teaching group. The researcher concluded that flipped instruction could assist the students in becoming active learners in class. Regarding other Arab countries, Flipped classrooms have also been implemented in Oman (Al-Naabi, 2020). In this study, 25 participants (EFL students) from an Omani university were involved where flipped classroom method was adopted. The study utilized many tools including pre-test, post-test, and semi-structured interviews (Al-Naabi, 2020). The study found that using flipped learning played an important part in improving the students’ English language comprehension and implementation of grammar. Students' attitudes toward the flipped approach were positive. Nevertheless, this study only explored the flipped classroom through the perspective of one element of classroom pedagogy, which is pre-class video-recorded lessons. Moreover, the study was limited to students from a single Omani university. This study also proposed that teachers should create brief videos that are easy for learners to comprehend and follow (Al-Naabi, 2020). Since the main goal is to make online availability of lessons to students and to allow students to view them at their own pace and level of understanding, the flipped classroom can serve this role excellently.

In addition to the strategies mentioned above, scaffolding is another potential teaching strategy for EFL students. Generally, scaffolding is a term that refers to the act of guiding students gradually toward greater understanding and, ultimately, higher independence in the learning process (Mohammed, 2020). Benefits of this method are numerous. it allows students to easily ask questions, offer feedback, and aid their classmates in acquiring new knowledge. Furthermore, scaffolding promotes student engagement in their classrooms and learning processes. Learners assume control of their teaching and learning through scaffolds that encourage them to go beyond their current levels of knowledge and skills. Overall, there are three main characteristics of scaffolding. First is the collaborative interaction between students and teachers. The second is that learning should take place in the learner's zone of proximal development. To accomplish this, the instructor must first determine the student's current level and then work on improving it. Scaffolding's final distinguishing feature is that the scaffold, or the teacher's assistance and supervision, is gradually lifted as the learner gains proficiency and
independence (Hamad & Metwally, 2019). Such teaching methods can be implicated for EFL students at the university level. In Saudi Arabia, the study of Mohammed (2020) showed that online scaffolding significantly increases the learning and writing skills of EFL students. The study's participants were randomly categorized into two main groups (31 for the experimental group and 31 for the control group). However, the participants of this study were 2nd year secondary school students, and rationale for this selection is not mentioned. It is asserted that innovative strategies like e-feedback in scaffolding could play an important role in effective teaching in online EFL classes at the university level (Alharbi, 2017). Another study evaluated the effect of online scaffolding in enhancing the learning and participation of EFL students (Pradita, Prasetya, & Maharsi, 2019). This study was conducted in Indonesia and involved 18 participants. It evaluated students’ discussions and presented results using thematic analysis. Although the student's participation and learning were enhanced, the researchers found that the first stage of scaffolding (where the instructor provides total guidance) is the most important step as compared to other stages (lowering the guidance and transfer of responsibility to student). Troudi and Zayani (2020) indicated that even scaffolding is necessary for EFL teachers to increase their knowledge through reading within a theoretical framework in order to provide a better service to students in the long run. Moreover, Hamad and Metwally (2019) highlighted that EFL teachers in Saudi universities can also utilize the scaffolding strategy using online applications and platforms (i.e., Zoom, blackboard). Also, EFL teachers have shown positive responses towards the implication of the scaffolding teaching method.

Overall, most of the previous research has focused on the student's perception and effectiveness of teaching in online EFL classes during Covid-19. But we have identified various learning and teaching strategies that were effective and have been implemented in online classes. Among them, cooperative/collaborative learning, breakout rooms, flipped classrooms, and scaffolding has been identified as important strategies utilized in the era of COVID-19 lockdown. These strategies have the potential to be implemented in Saudi Arabia or Middle East institutions for effective EFL teaching and rendered to be useful while teaching online.

Conclusion

This review paper was aimed at providing information and effective strategies implemented during Covid-19 in EFL classes. After reviewing various latest papers, we have identified a few teaching and learning strategies. Among them, cooperative/collaborative-based strategy seems to play the most effective role in students learning experience. Moreover, implementing the cloud-based collaborative breakout classes has brought positive results by influencing students' academic performance, enhancing student engagement and participation, and overall class performance. Other than these collaborative teaching, the flipped classroom can also be implemented for enhancing the student’s experience and effective teaching. Alternative, another important strategy, scaffolding, has been identified as an effective method for improving students' overall performance and harnessing their skill and full potential. All of these strategies can be applied in online teaching and have been found effective in EFL online classes. Moreover, these methods can be applied and have the potential to be implemented in Saudi Arabia /Middle East institutions and even other Asian countries for effective EFL teaching during the pandemic.
Implications

This research has keenly analyzed the literature and gathered many literature-based evidences to highlight significant implications. Theoretically, this research has comprehensively explained the unique strategies that can be adopted to teach and learn the English language during the era of COVID-19 and after. Moreover, it showed the significance of many strategies which were implemented in situations where face-to-face teaching were impossible. Thus, this research expanded the literature on English language teaching, English language learning, and strategies adopted by teachers during the COVID-19 era. In pandemics, when institutions are closed, it is difficult not only for teachers but also for students to continue the learning process. Therefore, this research has directed the attention towards different strategies which can help the teachers and students in developing excellence in English teaching and learning. In comparison to other studies, this research is unique and innovative as prior studies merely focused on English language teaching and neglected its significance in the era of COVID-19. In terms of methodological contributions, this research adopted an entirely unique way of gathering the data and analyzing it. Instead of case analysis, this research has adopted the literature review approach. The data were gathered from renowned databases to maintain reliability. Therefore, the results highlighted in this research could be used by further researchers to be supported with empirical investigations. Moreover, the findings of this research can help institutional managers, education officers, and educationists to develop effective strategies during pandemics or epidemics.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study emphasized on the important problem of English language teaching in the Asian continent with special focus on Middle Eastern learners whose native language is not English. The results highlighted several implications, but still, it has many limitations which can be addressed in future studies. First, this research is based on the literature review and qualitative in nature, and future studies can conduct the empirical investigation based on the strategies highlighted in the results. Secondly, the focus of this research is majorly on the Arab students from the Middle Eastern countries. The covid-19 affected equally every region; thus, it is important to focus on other regions, especially Europe and Africa. Therefore, future studies can conduct similar research from the perspective of any other region or country.

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Teachers' English Level Proficiency: Do Students Perceive It as a Threat or a Chance?

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Abstract
This study examines students' expectations regarding teachers' English proficiency level at Muhammadiyah Malang University (UMM), Indonesia. The concepts of proficiency are various among scholars and educators. Scholars vary in their concepts of proficiency; they also have multiple dimensions and methods when assessing teachers' proficiency. However, students are rarely asked about their expectations of teachers' English Proficiency level due to their supposed incapability and irrelevance in assessing the tutors. This study utilized an interpretive approach that explained the subjective reasons and meanings underlying social actions and viewed the world from specific individuals' standpoints and experiences. Focus group discussion (FGD), and an open-ended questionnaire to gather the data, was employed. The FGD led to rich data because participants interacted at the same time about the topic being raised. The second-year students of the English Department at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) were invited to participate. Regarding the teachers' proficiency, students' expectations fell into three parts. Firstly, teachers were expected to use mixed languages as the classroom language of instruction. Secondly, students expected teachers to possess sufficient level of English proficiency since this will potentially help students to have a better level of communication. Third, students are expected to have both native-speaking teachers and local teachers as a model of their communication. This study implicates teachers with high English proficiency are supposed to be vigilant to apply it across different settings and situations. This behavior hopefully leads to the felicitous decision of the classroom communication types.

Keywords: EFL Indonesia, English proficiency, student expectations, tertiary level

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Introduction
EFL contexts are unique in many ways, especially in Indonesia, where English had no wide use. It is also not used as a medium of communication in official domains like the government, the law courts, and the educational system. However, English is compulsory in Indonesia at all schooling levels. Therefore, its role was defined primarily through a conscious process through language planning and policy (Lauder, 2009). Due to that, there were several considerations worth discussing on teachers' use of English and their level of proficiency. Several questions like which English proficiency level should teachers possess? Do teachers' cohorts need particular types of English in order to carry out the teaching tasks?

One of the most commonly heard complaints is the low communication competence of English teachers. Gultom (2013) reported that results from competency exams show that the quality of teachers in Indonesia is still low. The average score of teacher competency tests taken in 2012 was 47.84, while the passing score required is 65. As Jalal et al. (2009) study claims, good teachers can produce good quality students. Accordingly, a poor teacher can contribute to poor students' English communication performance.

Research about the perceived importance of communication skills and their predictive value for academic performance was conducted by Palos & Petrovici (2014). The sample included 19 male students and 71 female students. Each participant filled out four questionnaires. The results showed that the students saw communication competence as an essential teaching activity. The level of involvement in interpersonal relationships with teachers shown by the communication occurrence was the premise to achieve academic performance in the future.

In the last two decades, an analysis of students' expectations has been prominent (Addison, Best, & Warrington, 2006; Ferreira & Santoso, 2008). Also, recognizing students' expectations as they first enrolled in a university helped educators boost their students' academic performances. As students continue their university education, they turn out to possess ample learning experiences, which teachers should acknowledge.

The study about students' expectations of their teachers' communication competence was critical since students have invested their money and time to learn English and deserve to get their investment back. Students' view of their teachers' communication competence should be strongly considered since students were the first people who directly got either positive or negative impact of teachers' behaviors and competencies. The study required assessing their perceptions, Prosser and Trigwell (1999) reported an influence of expectation on perception and showed the possibility of combining them to determine students' responses to teachers' behaviors. Moreover, students' past experiences in the classroom contribute to knowledge and further influence expectations. Without knowing students' expectations and concerns, communication development challenges remain unexplored. Therefore, this study aims to examine students' expectations regarding teachers' English proficiency level at Muhammadiyah Malang University (UMM), Indonesia. The research questions were formulated as follows: (1) what are students' expectations of teachers' communication competence?
Review of Related Literature

In this review of the related literature, the term English level of competence will be used interchangeably with English proficiency level. The concepts of proficiency are various among scholars and educators. For example, Bachman (1990) perceived proficiency from a social dimension, as sociolinguistics discourse is utilized when assessing efficiency. Shen (2013) also defined proficiency as teachers' capacity to produce the language effortlessly, utter spoken linguistic accurately, deliver the ideas efficiently, and present speech instantly without problems. Also, it has been discovered that teachers' proficiency includes instructing, providing feedback, asking questions, and presenting the teaching materials effectively and smoothly through the use of the target language (Abduh & Zainuddin, 2016). Other scholars defined proficiency as the types of English the teachers are capable of. For example, teachers with English academics are considered to have high proficiency compared to those that are only capable of using the language daily (e.g., Cummins, 1979). Mahboob (2018) discovered that teachers close to native speakers' proficiency, e.g., pronunciation and accent, were considered to possess a high English proficiency compared to those whose local attributes were distinct.

Scholars vary in their concepts of proficiency, and they also have multiple dimensions and methods when assessing teachers' proficiency — some measure by looking at a particular aspect, such as pronunciation. Concerning pronunciation, Harmer (2001) confirmed that effective interaction was assured by proper articulation. Also, Bennett (2007) noted that teachers should speak correctly to demonstrate that their language was understandable by the learners. Sulistiy0 (2016) also released a report on the teaching skills of the EFL in Indonesia. The project's objective was to update information on the English teaching skills of Indonesian EFL teachers. Several publications between 1990 and 2014 were further reviewed, and the study discovered that a high percentage of Indonesian teachers had low self-esteem in using English as the target language in classroom interactions due to the lack of proper pronunciation. This was caused by various accents and dialects of Indonesians, which were not easily changed.

Individuals and agencies have also researched more integrative approaches of measuring teachers' proficiency levels. From individuals' perspectives, Coleman (2009) carried out a report on Indonesian teachers' communication abilities, discovering that more than half of them only had a degree of 'novice' in English, as 45% had a "primary" or "intermediate" level. Also, only 0.7% of teachers were further observed to have working professional English, 0.2% possessed very excellent level.

Sulistiy0 (2016) and Yulia (2013) demonstrate that teachers' low English proficiency will likely impact graduates' employability. For example, some employers expressed dissatisfaction as graduates have trouble getting their ideas across in English. Furthermore, Jalal et al. (2009) stated that English was an internationally accepted medium of communication, which is vital for the young generation to adapt. Also, Palos and Petrovici (2014) examined the communicative competence level and their predictive importance for academic achievement. The results showed that communicative ability was a core element of learning for most students.

Additionally, one of the world's largest survey agency the English Proficiency Index (EPI), released a report in 2018, which stated that Indonesian teachers' proficiency was below other Asian countries, as it was ranked 51st among eighty-eight countries. It was farther behind
Singapore in the third position, the Philippines in 14th, Malaysia in 22nd, and Vietnam in 41st. The skills and components used as the survey indicators included listening and reading competencies, grammatical structure, vocabulary mastery, and communication abilities. It was also hypothesized that these indicators were interrelated, such as when the reading comprehension and vocabulary were low, the level of proficiency was low, respectively (Sundari, 2017; Syamsinar & Jabu, 2015). These ended up becoming an alarming concern for English teachers in Indonesia, as the EPI records over the past seven years (2011 and 2018) were also following other results of the agency's polling (OECD 2019; World Bank, 2018; UNESCO, 2012).

Furthermore, others still determined the teachers' level of proficiency through the use of the native speakers' benchmarks. These were observed from the most widespread international tests, developed by people from the "inner circle" of English users, such as IELTS, TOEFL, and CEFR (Renandya, Hamied, & Nurkamto, 2018). The test takers that obtained higher band overall in IELTS achieved a level of C1/C2 CEFR, or above 600 in TOEFL, respectively, were thought to have high English proficiency or considered near-native, even though this level did not guarantee the users to succeed in their higher education and job pursue.

Still, many studies examined the teachers' proficiency level from their self-assessment (Richards, 2017; Andrade & Brown, 2016; Jensen, Denver, Mees, & Werther, 2011; Gardner, 2000; Ross, 1998; Blanche, 1990; Oscarson, 1989). For example, a study by Chacón (2005), cited in Richards (2017), that teachers expressed,

A positive relationship between perceived level of language proficiency and sense of self-efficacy. The higher the teachers' perceived proficiency in language skills, the more efficacious they become. Moreover, the higher the teachers' sense of self-efficacy, the more tendency they had to use communicative-based strategies in their classes, with the inclination to focus more on meaning than accuracy"( p. 5)

Especially in Indonesia, students learn English for various reasons and with greater variety levels of English ability (Poedjiastutie, Amrin, & Setiawan, 2018). For example, many students enrolled at the Department of English due to their parents' choices (Aryani & Umar, 2020; Proboyo & Soedarsono, 2015; Kusumawati, Yanamandram, & Perera, 2010). However, students are rarely asked about their expectations of teachers' English Proficiency level due to their (students) supposed incapability and irrelevance in assessing the tutors. For example, many educators raised questions like "Why should students be asked to assess teachers' level of English proficiency? and do they have the ability to judge this?". 

Research Methods
This study utilized an interpretive approach that explained the subjective reasons and meanings underlying social actions. According to Reeves & Hedberg (2003), this approach comprehended the world from specific individuals' standpoints and experiences. Focus group discussion (FGD), a form of an in-depth interview to gather the data (Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins, & Popjoy, 1998), was employed. The FGD led to rich data because participants interacted at the same time about the topic being raised. The Second year English Department students were invited to participate since they were considered capable of delivering opinions regarding the teachers' level of proficiency. They also have completed some subjects related to
communication, such as Sociolinguistics, Cross-Cultural Understanding, Discourse Analysis, Speaking for Informal and Formal Discourse, and Speaking for Academic Purposes. There were five classes of the second-year English Department at UMM. The researcher invited three highest students, three medium students, two lowest students based on their GPA (Grade Point Average) in semester three. They were invited to attend Focus Group Discussions (FGD). These students’ opinions during the FGD give the researchers insight in constructing the questionnaires. Convenient sampling was utilized for the questionnaire purposes. The researcher further used a video camera to record all activities during FGD as it eased the data collection process. The FGDs were stopped three times, as the data saturation was achieved. According to Carlsen & Glenton (2011), saturation happens when the same information repeatedly emerges from different participants. The saturation point marked the end of the data collection process. Additionally, questionnaires were also utilized to triangulate the data derived from the FGD, as they were distributed to the second-year students who did not attend the discussion process. The development of the survey questions was also based on the emergence themes derived from the FGDs. The questionnaires were in the form of open-ended questions, as the study topics and objectives were introduced, with the research confidentiality also being explained to respondents. The participants did not need to write down their names to reassure them to deliver honest answers. The data collection procedures are framed in the Figure 1.

The data was analyzed using an interpretive approach, as Bogdan and Biklen (2007) underlined that this method involved working with data by managing and breaking it into manageable pieces, coding, synthesizing the information, and discovering emerging themes.

Most trustworthiness aspects were addressed in two ways, namely credibility and conformability. Moreover, credibility relates to the truth of the discoveries (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). Data credibility was enhanced since this study applied two data collection
devices (focus group discussion and questionnaire). Furthermore, conformability is a strategy to evade subjectivity during data collection procedures through data tracking (Bryman, 2012). This research also used a video recorder to confirm and track the sources of opinions, using peer-debriefing. Also, the transcripts from FGD were provided back to the participants to validate that their statements were correct and accurate.

The demographic information of participants in this FGD are described below. Most of the participants were within the age range between 19 and 21 years old. Participants who took part in the FGD came from all of the ESP Speaking classes at the English Department (ED). There were twelve female and ten male FGD participants for three times FGDs. Each FGD consisted of seven participants. Meanwhile, participants for the open-ended questionnaire were ED students who did not participate in the FGD. There were 11 female and 8 male participants in the age range between 19 and 21 years old filling out the open-ended questionnaire.

The Results

Regarding the teachers’ proficiency, students' expectations fell into three parts:

- The language of instruction in English classroom.
- The students wanted teachers' English proficiency to enable them to have a better level of communication.
- Students also expressed their preferences of native teachers as their English communication models.

The students' expectations of the language of instruction in English classrooms

Students expected that the teachers at ED UMM should use mixed languages- Indonesian and English- to understand the lessons better. This is due to the students' variety level of English proficiency. The university admission system affected the teaching of English as some students, not at the university entry-level were accepted, and had to learn together with the proficient ones. As the admission system and policy were not within the teachers’ authority, teachers needed to adjust students' diverse proficiency through mixed languages for classroom instructions.

During the FGD, students admitted that many were not at the basic English level, even though they had decided to study English as their major. The following excerpt was from the students: I am worried that when the lecturers explain materials in full English, I will likely end up misunderstanding them.

This thought was also supported by the result of the open-ended questionnaire, which stated that: I believe teachers need to use mixed language, as it is easier for us to understand what they say since we all have various proficiency levels.

Other students described the materials’ clarity as more critical than the teachers' English proficiency. It was further expected that the instruction and explanation of the materials should be clearly understood. During the teaching and learning process, the students rated clarity more important than fluency; therefore, they expected the teachers to shuttle between English and Indonesian. This sentiment was obtained from the FGD: I consider fluency number two. The most critical point is that the teachers need to know how to teach to get us interested in the lessons.
However, two students claimed that teachers should not use Indonesian excessively since it potentially demotivates students. Instead of overusing Indonesian, these students were suggested to employ different learning strategies, such as dictionaries and internet use, to understand the teacher's explanation. From the total 19 survey participants, the questionnaire data showed that three students did not encounter problems when their teachers spoke in full English during the lesson. However, 16 of them expected their teachers to use mixed languages.

Table 1. *Reasons for using mixed languages in English classrooms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' Expectations</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are supposed to use the mixed languages</td>
<td>Students' level of proficiency was of the greater variety. Therefore, material clarity is far more important than fluency. Students felt anxious when they were unable to elaborate their opinions in full English. Students liked the relaxed atmosphere created by teachers, such as using jokes and analogies in a language they understand. Indonesian students are basically multilingual in nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The students' expectations of communicative development**

Teachers' ability to deliver English lessons helps students improve their English to a higher level. Regarding communication, students mentioned that the two most important aspects need improving: the use a variety vocabulary and English fluency. Vocabulary development is substantial for effective language learning and plays an essential part in advancing oral communication. In the FGD, some participants indicated that they wanted teachers to broaden the students' vocabulary capacity. They believed that vocabulary richness allows them to be more confident during conversations. They also made valuable suggestions to master some English chunks, collocations, and idioms to make their proficiency better. They also expected teachers always to introduce different and varied vocabularies in every course meeting to expand their vocabulary. The language learners could not put any structures and functions comprehensively learned into practice, without sufficient vocabulary: *I believe the lecturers should provide us with new vocabularies during every meeting.*

This sentiment was also expressed by 10 out of 19 participants in the questionnaire results: *I wish my lecturers could develop my vocabulary.* Besides, the students expected their teachers to provide more communicational practices, not just grammar. *When we move overseas, foreigners are likely to understand us better when we speak clear in simple English, without much ado about grammar.*
In English communication classes, their roles were significantly crucial to teaching students decent communication while also helping them survive in the workplaces after graduating. Therefore, the teachers were expected to possess a high level of English proficiency. The following excerpt was obtained from the FGD: *Teachers refer to when we doubt specific English phrases and expressions. Teachers with a high level of English potentially prepare us for job competitions*. The questionnaire results supported this opinion, showing that 6 out of 19 students wanted their teachers to provide wider opportunities to improve their oral communication during a classroom activity. One of the students further stated that: *When the communication between teachers and students flows well, the learning process is likely optimized.*

The table below summarizes the students' expectations on the aspects of communication they require for improvement.

**Table 2. The advantageous side of the teachers’ high level of English proficiency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' Expectations</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers’ English proficiency</strong> enables students improving their communicative competence</td>
<td>Teachers are models of our English communication, e.g., pronunciation, the English expressions, and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In our class, teachers are those we ask and refer to when we doubt certain English phrases, and expressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers with high level of English potentially prepare us for job competitions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The students' expectations on the language communication models**

From the FGD, the students mentioned their preference for native teachers as the communication model. According to them, foreign teachers had better proficiency than the locals. FGD participants also mentioned that they acquired their English communicational skills considerably better when taught by foreign teachers because they did not allow the students to speak in L1 during the meeting. However, it was not easy to understand them since they often spoke faster. This excerpt was further obtained from the students; *The native lecturers forced us to speak English. Well, I believe it was for our sake to improve our confidence. However, unlike the locals, foreign teachers do not comprehend the Indonesian students' learning cultures. In contrast, local teachers understand why students were passive in the classrooms and this was due to their similar experiences and challenges when they were studying English.*

However, others participants expressed concern to both native and local teachers. Two students said that unlike local teachers, foreign teachers were not familiar with the Indonesian students' learning cultures, despite their high language efficiency. Students feel they have no experience in teaching communication subjects. These teachers provided topics and teaching materials mismatched with students' majors. Some students also questioned teaching appointments for native teachers, as an excerpt obtained from the FGD was as follows: *She gave...*
us speaking topics related to management and economics. I feel like we didn't need these materials.

In addition, students also expressed concerns about local teachers, as their (teachers) abilities and integrities needed to be scrutinized. Besides that, students opposed grammar, which frustrated and prevented them from practicing communication. The grammar presented by the teacher was not worth focusing too much.

Table 3. Communication model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' Expectations</th>
<th>Communication model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native teachers</td>
<td>1. No Indonesian or local language is allowed in the classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Excellent skills of a subject delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Good models of English (e.g., pronunciation and vocabularies, English expression)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Local/Non-Native teachers | a. Understanding the students’ lack and limitation of English, while allowing them to speak local language. |
|                          | b. Understanding students’ learning cultures               |
|                          | c. But focusing on Grammar                                 |

In conclusion, students' expectations of teachers' proficiency were divided into three categories: Due to the students' varying levels of English ability, students anticipated teachers at ED UMM to use a combination of Indonesian and English as the language of instruction in English classes. Second, the ability of teachers to present English classes assist students in improving their English. Students indicated that the two most essential parts of communication that need to be improved are the use of a variety of vocabulary and becoming more proficient in English. Third, despite the fact that both native English speakers and local teachers have strengths and drawbacks, students prefer native teachers as communication models for a variety of reasons.

Discussion

As language was a part of the culture, English teaching and learning should not be separated from understanding society learning with different levels of abilities. It was not surprising that students wanted the teacher to use mixed language instruction in this context. Canagarajah (2011) introduced the term mixed languages as translingual practices. Also, Creese and Blackledge (2010) argued that the capacity of teachers to switch flexibly between native and target languages affects the participation of learners through sufficient and understandable input. In a similar vein, García and Kleyn (2016) declared that translingual practices enabled teachers
to generally learn the target language, increased learners' linguistic vocabulary, assisted in bilingualism, and understood the dialect learned to meet the level of students. Additionally, Medgyes (2006) claimed that most English teachers in Indonesia were non-native speakers and described them as individuals observing the language from a foreign viewpoint.

From the open-ended questionnaire, students mentioned a variety of reasons for the teachers should use mixed language for the classroom instructions. Students felt anxious when they could not elaborate their opinions in full English. Students liked the relaxed atmosphere created by teachers, such as using jokes and analogies in a language they understand. Indonesian students are basically multilingual in nature. In other words, the high level of teachers’ English proficiency may become a source of threat if the teachers overlooked students’ characteristics. Many studies have demonstrated that this practice is seemingly difficult to avoid. In a similar vein, Poedjiastutie, Rohmah, & Rahagia (2020) mentioned a variety of reasons of utilizing translingual practices: the social bonding, comprehensible input, language transfer, linguistic diversity and non-native teachers of Indonesian.

In the second expectation from the students, teachers’ English proficiency should enable them to improve their communicative competence. Students indicated that the two most essential parts of communication that need to be strengthened are using various vocabulary and becoming more proficient in English. This finding has similarity to the study of Schmitt (2008) who acclaimed that vocabulary capacity is essential indication for language proficiency. Similarly, learning any foreign language is fundamentally associated with vocabulary knowledge that the learners possessed. Thus, the shortage of vocabulary items obstructs the process of second language learning. In addition, Adam (2016) lack of vocabulary knowledge hinders the real communication of EFL learners to a great extent. Hence, it is predictable that undergraduate EFL learners should have the appropriate vocabulary knowledge.

The results of the open-ended questionnaire support the FGD that students highly proficient teachers will bring students to the higher level of the communication skills and can become a model of students’ English communication, e.g., pronunciation and English expressions since proficient teachers is the persons that students ask and refer to when they hesitate specific English phrases and expressions. In addition, teachers with a high level of English potentially prepare students for job and academic competitions. These expectations show that the high level of teachers’ English proficiency may have greater potential to assist the good students in developing their English to the upper level. However, some factors have to be taken into consideration, such as students’ willingness/unwillingness to communicate (Liu & Jackson, 2008); authentic setting and context for communication to happen (Bailey & Huang, 2011), students’ needs of English learning (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018).

The third expectation shows a little contradictory result. Despite mixed languages supposedly being used for the classroom instructions, students mentioned their preference for Native English Speaker Teachers (NESTs) as their linguistic communication model. Students expected teachers to match their level of the language in classroom interactions. This hypothesis is accordance to Ahmad & Jusoff study (2009). They found that teachers' code-switching was an effective teaching strategy when dealing with low proficiency learners. However, more proficient learners of English expect different classroom teaching behaviors. Therefore, when
local teachers cannot satisfy these highly proficient English learners with a sophisticated communication model, they expect to have NESTs as their examples of communication. Some students further stated that they significantly acquired English communication skills with native teachers because speaking in local languages was not allowed during the class.

Proficient learners also expected more opportunities to get full development of their English. In order to mediate the long debate on the required English communication level that should be possessed by EFL teachers, Firth & Wagner (1997) argued that tutors in EFL contexts already had their first language. Therefore, instead of using a monolingual competence benchmark, the English proficiency level's result should refer to the multilingual criterion. Also, it was not realistic to require learners to acquire native speakers like pronunciation, and not plausible to expect them to spend much time pursuing this unattainable and irrelevant goal.

Moreover, the follow-up study needs to be carried to discover the specific types of the language (e.g., daily, specific purpose, or academic English), with the level of proficiency needed by the teachers to successfully execute the teaching tasks for Indonesian EFL learners. Furthermore, many research results (Hakim, 2015; Zlatić, Bjekić, Marinković, & Bojović, 2014; Suciu & Mata, 2011; Sprague, 1993) showed that proficiency level was not only capability that teachers must embrace when carrying out the teaching duty. Pedagogical, personal, and professional competencies were other dimensions that needed consideration. For example, EFL teachers with low and intermediate students did not need to deliver the instructions in full English, as tutors were expected to focus on a specific proficiency type that serves their immediate classroom needs (e.g., Freeman, 2017; Richards, 2017). Teachers with high English proficiency are supposed to be vigilant to apply it across different settings and situations while also understanding students' situations, which leads to the felicitous decision of the classroom communication behavior.

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The Relationship between Test-Taking Strategies and Thai Students’ Reading Comprehension Test Performance

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Abstract
Tests are often applied to evaluate students’ academic performance in all educational contexts. In order to be successful in the tests, students are required not only to possess the knowledge of the subject, but also test-taking strategies which enable them to gain higher test score. The present study was aimed at investigating the relationship between the students’ test-taking strategies use and their reading comprehension test performance and the types and frequency of the test-taking strategies used among high and low proficiency students. This research employed the mixed-methods approach. A total of sixty eight university students at an international university in Thailand took part in this study. They were asked to take a reading comprehension proficiency test and a questionnaire to find out about their use of the test taking strategies during the test. The results revealed that the test-taking strategies had a significantly positive influence on students’ reading comprehension test performances. Although high proficiency students used the test-taking strategies more frequently than those in low proficiency group, both groups of students were found to similarly employ a variety of techniques to cope with the challenges in the reading test. The findings of this present study not only empirically verified the benefits of the test-taking strategies, but also emphasizes the necessity of the formal instruction of the strategies used in the English tests, especially the ones considered most effective for tertiary students, to ensure their greater academia success.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, test-taking strategies, test performance, test management strategies, Thai students

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Introduction

Tests or exams are an assessment tool administered to measure and evaluate test takers’ knowledge and skills or even learning progress in a particular topic, subject or issue, especially in educational contexts of all levels (Cohen, 1998; Roger & Harley, 1999). Still, a number of ELT scholars point out that the success in the tests is not only dependent on content knowledge, but also on test-taking strategies as well as individual students’ academic background. That is to say, test performance or test scores involve a wide range of variables, such as linguistic knowledge, world knowledge, analytical skills, time management skills, or processing capacity, just to name some. (Cohen, 2006; Dodeen, 2015; Hambleton, Swaminathan & Rogers, 1991; Ajideh & Nourdad, 2019; Lee, 2011). Unquestionably, the test-taking strategies play a substantial role in ensuring satisfactory achievements in English language testing.

Test-taking strategies are commonly utilized in virtually all language testing situations and test forms and formats, encompassing oral test, paper-based test and computerized test (Cohen & Upton, 2007). So far, those students employ to tackle the tests and how the students use such strategies have been extensively studied, mostly with reading strategies as the main research focus (Dodeen, 2015; Phakiti, 2003). Hirano (2009) and Salehi (2011), for example, mentioned in the same manner that, regardless of students’ language proficiency, the use of the test-taking strategies positively influenced the reading test performance. These strategies were frequently adopted as compensatory strategies by exploiting prior knowledge, intuition, and preconception to compensate for insufficient knowledge or understanding in what they read, or by resorting to context clues to make sense of the meanings of unfamiliar and unknown words or establish intersentential links within and between paragraphs.

In spite of verified merits of the test-taking strategies in enhancing overall performance in reading tests, as noted by Cohen (2006), not all test-takers know well what strategies to use and how to put them into operation to maximize their scores in the actual testing situations. Thanks to these reasons, it comes as no surprise that why some students perform better than their counterparts on the same test. Moreover, Lee (2011) pointed out in his paper that currently a number of language teachers are still not fully aware of their students’ incapability to approach the test properly. As a consequence, the teachers seem to inadvertently have overlooked the significance of equipping students with effective tactics to deal with the tests.

Moreover, Singh, Ong, Singh, Maniam and Mohtar (2021) noted that, so far, there is not much research addressing the relationship between students’ test-taking strategies and their test scores in Thai context, especially at college level. Consequently, to bridge this gap, this current study aims to investigate the relationship between students’ with different proficiency levels test-taking strategies and their reading comprehension test performance. The findings would fulfill the gap in the literature on how university students approach reading comprehension tests, and would make the teachers see the significance of integrating the instruction of the test-taking strategies into the language programs offered by the university.

The questions posed in this research are as follows:

1. Is there a relationship between test-taking strategies use and students’ reading comprehension test performance?
2. How do high and low proficiency students differ in their use of test-taking strategies?
Literature Review

In this section, the concept of test-taking strategies, the relationship between the use of the test-taking strategies and reading comprehension test performance as well as the previous research on the test-taking strategies are presented.

Test-Taking Strategies

Over the two decades, many scholars have defined the meanings of test-taking strategies. Broadly speaking, Test-taking strategies refer to the analysis and problem solving approaches test takers employ to answer questions in a testing situation. According to Nikolov (2006), the test-taking strategies are defined as tactics or techniques used by individual test-takers to circumvent difficulty or problems in tests. As Cohen and Upton defined the term (2006), the test-taking strategies are “test-taking processes which the respondents have selected and which they are conscious of” (p.4) used to solve specific test tasks. Nonetheless, there exist at least three convergent meanings of the test-taking strategies arising from the literature, which include: 1) language learner strategies (Cohen & Upton, 2006; Cohen, 2013; Bremmer, 1999), 2) test management strategies (Oxford, 1990; Cohen, 1998), and 3) test wiseness strategies (Allan & MacLennan, 1997; Roger & Harley, 1999; Winke & Lim, 2017).

With reference to language learner strategies, they are defined as the ways students adopt to carry out test tasks by utilizing fundamental language knowledge and skills of writing, reading, speaking, listening as well as lexical, grammatical, and translation knowledge and experiences (Cohen & Upton, 2006; Cohen, 2013). As exemplified by Cohen (2006), within a reading comprehension test, a student might use a technique of word-for-word translation to construct meanings and details out of a written text in order to ultimately arrive at literal and global comprehension. Also, skimming and scanning can be operationalized by a test-taker as a speed reading technique with the aim to get a general overview of the target material, subsequently making him capable of producing a correct response to language test items. Bremmer (1999) addressed these language strategies as ‘a set of integrated skills’ which is a combination of receptive and productive skills.

Regarding test management strategies, some second language acquisition and English language teaching scholars view them as tactical procedures adopted by test-takers by relying on test content-related knowledge, rather than linguistic skills, which may include, but are not limited to time management, reasoning, guessing, error-avoidance, elimination, monitoring, and risk taking (Cohen, 1998). This type of strategies is commonly employed among experienced test-takers, in particular the ones who are accustomed to multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blanks tests (Anderson, 2001). As Peng (2005) remarked, proficient test-takers always review all the questions to find the keywords and match them with similar or the same keywords in the provided text. The selected keywords would serve as clues which are then exploited to get rid of distraction choices, thus enabling the test-takers to focus only on the remaining options. In some cases, if the test time is running out, some students might decide to make a logical guess, instead of a random one, based on their current knowledge to maximize the chances to obtain the correct answer.

With respect to test wiseness strategies, they are conceptualized as the actions to note and take advantage of test forms and formats with no reliance on any subject and world knowledge (Roger & Harley, 1999). Cohen also (2013) defines test wiseness strategies as “using knowledge
of testing formats and other peripheral information to obtain responses – very possibly the correct ones – on language tests without engaging the requisite L2 knowledge and performance ability.” (Cohen, 2013, p. 4). Essentially, such strategies are matters of strategic selection and elimination decision. Allan and MacLennan (1997) explained a certain ways that test wise test-takers approach the test of different patterns. In the case of multiple-choice test, they just glance over the choices and eliminate one of them that make the least sense to them such as ‘none of the above’, ‘all of the above’ or “A and B”. As for open-ended questions, the test-takers might choose to do an easy item or one with the highest mark first before moving on to the rest of the questions. Sometimes tricky or ambiguous questions might be skipped. However, the prudent test-takers would not forget to mark those skipped questions in order for them to come over before the test ends, thus reducing the chances of leaving any questions blank unintentionally. Winke and Lim (2017) stated that these strategies help students to “know things that are unrelated to what is actually being tests” (p. 318) and, significantly, they do not have to be academically knowledgeable to effectively apply the tactics.

It is quite apparent that what is meant by test-taking strategies is subject to the techniques and procedures used by test-takers (Bumbálková, 2021). Even though the definitive meanings of the test-taking strategies vary based upon an individual’s interpretations, they all have beneficial effects, at least to some extent, on the test-takers’ test performance when they are used appropriately.

**Test-Taking Strategies and Reading Comprehension Test Performance**

As empirically evidenced by some research studies, it was found that test-taking strategies correlate positively with students’ test performance in the reading tests (Huang, 2016; Lee, 2011; Phakiti, 2003). Still, the effectiveness of each strategy variably depends on such factors as individual students’ language proficiency, background knowledge, test type and format, gender, culture, native language or even psychological factors such as anxiety, motivation or attitude towards the tests (Hambleton, Swaminathan & Rogers, 1991). Accordingly, a variety of strategies are employed differently, resulting in different test outcomes.

To ensure the best possible score, Ajideh and Nourdad (2019) suggested that the test candidates use various strategies to respond to a given task in the reading comprehension test. To illustrate this point, the test-takers should keep away from pure guessing at all costs and instead make an educated guess by using their prior knowledge to its fullest, as well as not stick with undue hesitation and spare time for the rest of the test. In a similar vein, Roger and Harley (1999) advised the students to notice the characteristics of the exams they are performing, read the instruction carefully, evaluate the point value of each item in the entire test and manage the allotted time properly. In addition, to narrow down the possible choices, it is recommended that key points and semantic clues be drawn from both questions and different parts of the reading passage in order to make intertextual inferences. Altogether, these strategies will complement each other; therefore, the probability of getting a higher score could be warranted.

**Previous Studies on Test-Taking Strategies**

Over the past three decades have seen a growing body of research on test-taking strategies. The review of the previous studies revealed that the majority of the research were carried out to find out the relationship between test-takers’ test-taking strategies used and their test performance.
The Relationship between Test-Taking Strategies
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Whereas some research in this area employed a qualitative methodology such as questionnaires, interviews, self-reports and think-aloud protocols (Rubb, Ferne & Choi, 2006; Yang, 2004), other studies employed a mixed-method approach with a combination of pre- and post-comprehension tests with such instruments as open-ended and close-ended questionnaires and recall interviews (Ajideh & Nourdad, 2019; Lee, 2011; Razaei, 2005; Yien, 2001). The participants in almost all of the studies were the college students of diverse language background such as Iranian, Chinese, Korean, American, and with different language proficiency levels. Razaei (2005) and Yien (2001) conducted the quantitative studies on test-takers’ use of test-taking strategies and their overall test performance. The results demonstrated that there was a positive correlation between test-takers’ use of test-taking strategies and their overall test performance. Nevertheless, there were other research studies that showed the contrast results, which found no significance difference in high and low proficiency test-takers’ test-taking strategies use and their test scores (Lee, 2011; Tavakoli & Samian, 2014).

Rubb et al. (2006) and Yang (2004) conducted qualitative studies to investigate individual students’ characteristics of their use of test-taking strategies. The results showed that the use of test-taking strategies varied according to individual students’ characteristics. Test management and test wiseness strategies were found to be the most frequently used strategies among students (Rubb et al., 2006; Yang, 2004). The examples of commonly used strategies included underlying keywords in the questions, eliminating distraction choices, retrieving information from long-term memory and managing the test time based on test formats. In addition, Singh et al. (2021) investigated weak students’ test-taking strategies use in Malaysia. The results provided insight into weak students’ use of test-taking strategies. They tended to employ a compensation strategy by mean of which guessing answers.

The previous studies on test-taking strategies in Thailand were found be similar to those done in international setting in terms of research focus and research instruments. Phakiti (2003) and Oranpattanachai (2010) conducted similar studies on students’ test-taking strategies. They found that the use of students’ test-taking strategies was beneficial on their test scores. The strategies helped Thai students of different language levels respond to the test tasks more wisely and confidently. The researchers indicated that a wider array of strategies were utilized by high achieving students more frequently than lower achieving ones; this was one of the main reasons why high achievers always outperformed low achievers in the tests. Vattanapath and Jaiprayoon (1999) and Waiprakhon and Jaturapitakkul (2018) pointed out in their research that the ways each strategy was employed were a good reflection of students’ behaviors employed for the sake of getting the highest score. Although students of different proficiency levels employed the same strategies, more advanced students were found to be better utilizing the test-taking strategies than their friends.

To date, in Thai educational context, since there has been little research reported on the connection between test-taking strategies and test performance, the aim of the present research is to explore further such relation among high and low proficiency students in order to highlight and verify the benefits of the test-taking strategies.

Methods
Since this research aims to explore university students’ test-taking strategies use when
dealing with the reading comprehension test, it requires both quantitative and qualitative data to validate the findings. Therefore, a mixed methods approach was employed as it allows for data triangulation, which would lead to greater data accountability and comprehensiveness.

**Participants**

The participants of this research are 68 English I students who enrolled in an English I course offered by Institute for English Language Education (IELE) at an international university as the required course in the academic year 1/2020. The sample, convenience sampling, was randomly assigned to the researcher by Office of the University Registrar. Since the course is a core course for all freshmen, the participants in this study are students from different disciplines and faculties.

**Instruments**

There were two research instruments employed in this current study: reading comprehension proficiency test and test-taking strategies questionnaire.

Reading comprehension proficiency test consisted of 30 multiple choice items, testing reading proficiency level of the students. In order to assess the reliability of the reading proficiency test results, Cronbach’s Alpha test was conducted in SPSS Statistics program with all of the test items. The result showed the relative consistency of the participants’ performance on all test items with the obtained Cronbach’s Alpha total of .75 and p-value <0.05.

The test-taking strategies questionnaire was developed from the one used in the study by Cohen and Upton (2007). The participants were asked to go through a 5-point Likert scale on test-taking strategies with 1 for never, 2 for seldom, 3 for sometimes, 4 for usually, and 5 for always. The questionnaire consisted of 11 statements on language learning strategies, 10 statements on test management strategies, and 10 statements on test wiseness strategies, with open-ended slot for students to freely express their comments on their use and experience of each strategy at the end of the questionnaire.

**Data Collecting Procedures**

Data were collected in two main phases. In the first phase, the participants were asked to take 30 multiple-choice questions reading proficiency test to measure their reading proficiency. The participants were grouped according to their reading comprehension proficiency test scores. After taking reading comprehension test, students were put into high and low proficiency groups. The students who gained scores 25.5 or above were assigned to high proficiency group, and those who gained 12 or below were assigned to low proficiency group. The number of students in each group is presented in Table one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Proficiency</th>
<th>Range of Scores</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Above 25.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Below 12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second phase, after taking reading comprehension test, the participants were given a 30 items test-taking strategy questionnaire to find out about their test-taking strategies used in the reading comprehension test which encompassed three types of strategies: 1) language learning Strategies, 2) Test Management Strategies, and 3) Test Wiseness Strategies.
strategies, 2) test management strategies and 3) test wiseness strategies.

Data Analysis
The data collected from reading comprehension proficiency test and questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS program which was used to calculate the frequency, arithmetic means (\( \bar{x} \)), and standard deviation (S.D.) of each item. The self-administered 5-point Likert scale questionnaires were analyzed using the descriptive method with Pearson product-moment correlation. The independent-sample t-test was used to compare the data collecting from high and low proficiency groups students.

Results
Question 1: Is there a relationship between test-taking strategy use and students’ reading comprehension test performance?

The analysis of Pearson product-moment correlation showed that there was a significant relationship between students’ test-taking strategies and their reading test performance. (\( r = .44, p = .00 \)). As presented in Table two, the mean score of students’ test-taking strategies use was 3.12 (S.D. = .59), whereas the mean score of students’ reading comprehension test was 16.41 (S.D. = 5.14).

Table 2. Overall correlations between test-taking strategies and students’ test performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>( r )</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test-taking strategies</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ test performance</td>
<td>16.41</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( p \leq 0.01 \) (2-tailed) \( p \leq 0.05 \) (2-tailed)

All three aspects of test-taking strategies were statistically correlated with students’ reading comprehension test performance as presented in Table three.

Table 3. Overall correlation scores of three aspects of test-taking strategies and students’ test performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LLS</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>TW</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language learner strategies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.77**</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test management strategies</td>
<td>.77**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td>.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test wiseness strategies</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall scores</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( p \leq 0.01 \) (2-tailed) \( p \leq 0.05 \) (2-tailed)

As Table three demonstrated, test management strategies showed a strongest relationship with students’ test scores (\( r = .57 \)) as they were most employed in testing situation. This showed that the more frequently a student employed test management strategies, the better her/she performed on the reading comprehension test. Moreover, language learner strategies also gained high relationship with students’ test scores (\( r = .37 \)). Even though the correlation between students’ reading comprehension test performance and test wiseness strategies was not high, test wiseness strategies were still correlated with students’ test scores at least to some extent (\( r = .23 \)).

Question 2: How do high and low proficiency students differ in their types and frequencies of test-taking strategies used?
The independent-samples t-tests were carried out to compare the students’ mean scores between high and low proficiency groups by analyzing them in relation to individual strategies including language learner, test management, and test wiseness strategies.

The overall mean scores are compared and analyzed using independent-sample t-test. The results are presented in Table four.

Table 4. *Comparison of mean scores under language learner strategies used by high and low proficiency students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High proficiency students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low proficiency students</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( p \leq 0.01 \) (2-tailed) \( p \leq 0.05 \) (2-tailed)

As shown in Table five, the compared overall mean scores are analyzed using independent-sample t-test. The overall result showed significant differences between high (\( \bar{x} = 3.34 \)) and low (\( \bar{x} = 2.92 \)) proficiency students using the language learning strategies. This indicates that high proficiency students employed language learner strategies more than low proficiency students while taking reading comprehension test.

An analysis of types and frequencies of language learner strategies employed by high and low proficiency students are presented in Table five.

Table 5. *Frequency of language learner strategies used by high and low proficiency students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Learner Strategies</th>
<th>High (( n=10 ))</th>
<th>Low (( n=15 ))</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 use key words to find the main idea</td>
<td>3.26 0.63</td>
<td>3.26 0.70</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 run through the entire passage quickly to find the main idea</td>
<td>3.4 0.51</td>
<td>3.4 0.63</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 identify specific information by reading the passage slowly and carefully</td>
<td>3.4 0.69</td>
<td>3.33 0.72</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 interpret the meanings of unfamiliar words by using hints</td>
<td>2.9 0.73</td>
<td>2.86 0.63</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 reread the passage to make sure the main idea is understood correctly</td>
<td>4.3 0.67</td>
<td>2.66 0.72</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 ask myself about the overall meaning of the passage</td>
<td>4.1 0.73</td>
<td>2.93 0.70</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 determine meaning of unfamiliar words by using sentence patterns/grammatical features</td>
<td>3.4 0.51</td>
<td>3.33 0.89</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 review key ideas by taking notes</td>
<td>2.2 0.63</td>
<td>2.06 1.09</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 examine roots of unknown words to determine their meanings</td>
<td>2.5 0.70</td>
<td>2.46 0.83</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 use background knowledge to determine meanings of unknown words</td>
<td>4 0.81</td>
<td>2.93 0.88</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Data from Table five demonstrated that there was a somewhat distinct resemblance in terms of types and frequencies of test-taking strategies used by high and low proficiency students.
Although the top 3 test-taking strategies employed most frequently by high proficiency students were “reread the passage to make sure the main idea is understood correctly” ($\bar{x} = 4.3$), “ask myself about the overall meaning of the passage” ($\bar{x} = 4.1$), and “use background knowledge to determine meanings of unknown words” ($\bar{x} = 4$), the two groups of students were found to use the same strategies with nearly the same frequency which included “running through the entire passage quickly to find the main idea” ($\bar{x} = 3.4$ [High], $\bar{x} = 3.4$ [Low]), “identify specific information by reading the passage slowly and carefully” ($\bar{x} = 3.4$ [High], $\bar{x} = 3.33$ [Low]), “determine meanings of unfamiliar words by using sentence patterns/grammatical features” ($\bar{x} = 3.4$ [High], $\bar{x} = 3.33$ [Low]) and “use key words to find the main idea” ($\bar{x} = 3.26$ [High], $\bar{x} = 3.26$ [Low]). From the findings, it can be seen that both groups of students preferred to use a variety of strategies in finding and making sense of the main idea of the reading passage as well as in decoding the meanings of unfamiliar and unknown words.

Likewise, qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions in the questionnaires reflected pretty much corresponding ideas. According to the statements made by highly proficient students, they always applied the techniques in finding the main idea by reading the passage in its entirety. They mentioned that the main idea was normally not clearly stated. The beginning of the passage or topic sentences at times just explained the topic or subject to be discussed in detail later, and the concluding sentences or paragraph merely provided a conclusive summary of the information from the overall passage. On the same token, students who were low proficient students, explained that from time to time the main idea was implied or inferred ideas. Accordingly, they had to take specific words and supporting details into account which covered identifying facts, reasons, hints, and key concepts from every single sentence or paragraph, and then logically piece them together to indicate the central idea of the passage.

Moreover, the responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire revealed that several participating students utilized background and grammatical knowledge in facilitating the interpretation of unusual vocabulary. For instance, some students stated that, to puzzle out both direct and implied meaning of a word they ran across, especially content words, they exploited the context surrounding those unknown words as well as their positions and structural functions in paragraphs or sentences. Eventually, all these hints would lead them to the most equivalent and comparable meanings of the target words.

Table 6. Comparison of mean scores under test management strategies used by high and low proficiency students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High proficiency students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low proficiency students</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table six, there was a significant difference between high ($\bar{x} = 3.68$) and low ($\bar{x} = 2.72$) proficiency students when using the test management strategies. It was obvious that highly proficient students employed test management strategies more than low proficient students did when taking the test.

An analysis of types and frequencies of test management strategies employed by high and low proficiency students are presented in Table seven.
As can be seen from Table seven, test management strategies used by high and low proficiency students were found to be different both in terms of sub-techniques and frequency of each sub-techniques. Whereas the most frequently used test management strategies for highly proficient students were “consider related vocabulary and sentences to select the correct choice” (\( \bar{x} = 4.8 \)), “make a prediction or formulate my own answer while reading the passage” (\( \bar{x} = 4.6 \)) “consider answer options by concentrating on familiar options” (\( \bar{x} = 4.5 \)), and “reread questions for greater clarification” (\( \bar{x} = 4.5 \)), low proficient students were found to prefer to use “eliminate similar/overlapping option answers to choose the correct choice” (\( \bar{x} = 3.6 \)), “reread questions and read the passage to look for clues” (\( \bar{x} = 3.1 \)), “consider options before going back to the passage” (\( \bar{x} = 2.93 \)), and “consider unrelated vocabulary to discard plausible distractors” (\( \bar{x} = 2.93 \)).

Still, interestingly, even though the results showed that the sub-techniques in managing test were found to be different between the two groups of participating students, both groups quite obviously valued the connection between the associated ideas in the options and the ones in the reading passage, with a major purpose to predict and find the most likely or the correct answer to the question. As some students explained in the slots provided in the survey, they overcame the challenges in the long and complex reading tests by underlining or marking such key words as facts, names, dates or figures in the option answers and matched them with similar words or synonyms in the passage, as they strongly believed that such technique would help them efficiently manage time and guided them in the right direction in locating the key ideas, thus not having to mulling over the distractors or overlapping options in multiple-choice items.

Apart from considering the options, both high and low proficient students were also found to utilize the technique of rereading questions to indicate the clues and help them solidify their understanding of the author’s purpose. Students similarly said that by reading the questions twice...
or more did help them approach the reading text more properly. That is to say, they could build a framework in mind and had a clear sense of what to look for or what parts needed to be critically interpreted in the reading passage. Consequently, there would be an increased tendency to reach the right answer to the questions amid an information dense target text.

An analysis of test taking strategies questionnaire scores between high and low proficiency students and test wiseness strategies is presented in Table eight.

Table 8. Comparison of mean scores under test wiseness strategies used by high and low proficiency students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High proficiency students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low proficiency students</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated in Table eight, the result showed no significant difference between high (x = 3.19) and low (x = 3.18) proficiency students when it comes to using the test wiseness strategies. The result is in line with the correlation results that indicated a significant relationship between test-taking strategies and reading comprehension test performance.

An analysis of types and frequencies of test wiseness strategies employed by high and low proficiency students is presented in Table nine.

Table 9. Frequency of test wiseness strategies used by high and low proficiency students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Wiseness Strategies</th>
<th>High (n=10)</th>
<th>Low (n=15)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 read instruction carefully</td>
<td>4.2 0.91</td>
<td>4.06 0.88</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 start with easy questions</td>
<td>2.3 0.67</td>
<td>2.46 0.91</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 allocate specific time to each question</td>
<td>2.3 0.67</td>
<td>2.26 1.27</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>according to difficulty/length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 underline key words in questions</td>
<td>2.1 0.56</td>
<td>1.93 0.88</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 answer questions in chronological order</td>
<td>3.8 0.91</td>
<td>3.8 1.01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 answer questions without knowing the exact</td>
<td>4.4 0.51</td>
<td>4.6 0.50</td>
<td>-0.95</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 use clues in other items to answer item</td>
<td>2.2 0.61</td>
<td>2.33 0.66</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under consideration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 select the item based on the overlapping</td>
<td>3 0.66</td>
<td>4.26 0.45</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>words/phrases from the passage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 reread all questions to make sure they</td>
<td>4 0.94</td>
<td>2.66 0.72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are understood correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 avoid last minute change</td>
<td>3.6 1.07</td>
<td>3.4 1.05</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

From Table nine, it was found that some test wiseness strategies were preferably used with similar high frequencies by high and low proficiency students, including “answer questions without knowing the exact answer” (x̅ = 4.4 [High], x̅ = 4.6 [Low]), “read instruction carefully” (x̅ = 4.2 [High], x̅ = 4.06 [Low]), “answer questions in a chronological order” (x̅ = 3.8 [High], x̅ = 3.8 [Low]) and “avoid last minute change” (x̅ = 3.6 [High], x̅ = 3.4 [Low]). Statements made by several students illustrated how both group of students approached the test wisely.

As remarked by students in the questionnaire, every time before starting reading the passage, they always read the instruction accurately because it not only told them what to do...
such as ‘put an “X” in the square’ or ‘blacken the circle with the pencil’, but it also warned them of what were not allowed to do in the test and during the test period such as ‘do not make unnecessary marks on the answer sheet’, ‘mark only ONE answer for each question’, ‘stay in your seat until you receive permission from the proctor’ or ‘raise your hand, when you are ready to submit your test’. Students also said that many of their friends sometimes took the instructions lightly, as a consequence, they felt regret making mistakes due to their heedlessness and negligence.

Moreover, when it came to answering the questions, students responded to the test questions without knowing the exact answers. Yet, it was not an absolute random guessing as one might suppose. One student, for example, stated after crossing off the answers I knew were definitely wrong on the first pass and eliminating one or two likely wrong options, I often took a careful look at the remaining choices and then made a guess as I personally thought that it would more or less give me a better chance of guessing correctly. Also, it was found that a handful of students preferred to make an educated guess over a random one. According to the statements made by students, once they read the reading text and narrowed or eliminated some choices, they would make a connection between their existing knowledge and the clues available in the text and drew inferences based on their own reasoning before making an informed guess.

Furthermore, the qualitative data revealed that some students answered the questions according to their orders of appearance. As evidenced by students’ remarks, they said that by answering the tests in chronological order, there was a significantly less chances of unintentionally leaving the questions unanswered. However, in case of the questions asking about main idea, it was impossible to go in chronological order because this type of question required them to read the whole reading passage to grasp the key idea. Accordingly, they decided to mark the unaddressed choices in order for them to come back again. In addition, the students were found manage the test time by avoiding changing the answers in the last minute. At times participating students reported that they found themselves hesitated between the two choices, but they always decided to move on in avoidance of getting trapped or ending up stuck halfway through the test. As one student mentioned, when I tried to avoid changing the answer while the test time was running out, as “I might take away time from a few other unsolved questions and paid the price in lost time.”

Discussion

**Question 1: Is There a Relationship between Test-Taking Strategy Use and Students’ Reading Comprehension Test Performance?**

The findings showed that all three aspects of test-taking strategy were significantly correlated with students’ test performance, with test management strategies being the most frequently used strategies. Moreover, it was found that the more frequently a student adopted the test-taking strategies, the better her/she performed on the reading comprehension test. The results of the present study were found to be similar to those of previous research by Anderson, Bachman, Perkin, & Cohen (1991), Phakiti (2003) and Lee (2011). They reported, in quite the same way, that the test management strategies can facilitate test takers to perform better on reading comprehension test. Advanced test-takers, in particular, deliberately adopted the strategies to manage the reading tests due to their intimate acquaintance with the tests and they knew how their test would be scored. As a consequence, they were well capable of allocating a
proper amount of time to answer each test item. For example, while and after reading a particular reading text, high proficiency students would always predict and formulate their own answers about the key points in their mind, and read the questions and answer choices carefully and thoroughly before making a final decision on the correct answer (Guo, Kim, Yang, and Liu, 2016). Likewise, some of highly proficient students in Anderson et al. (1991) and Lee (2011) mentioned that they used keyword strategy to identify key ideas in the reading text and ignored irrelevant information that was not covered by the tests. After reviewing the questions, experienced students knew well what portions of the text were worth reading, hence being able to decide how to go about responding to the questions. As suggested by Vattanapath and Jaiprayoon (1999), when students know early what to do with the tests, it can also decrease test anxiety that might be occur while taking the test as well as enhance students’ motivation and attitudes toward test.

**Question 2: How Do High and Low Proficiency Students Differ in Their Types and Frequencies of Test-Taking Strategies Used?**

The results from the present study demonstrated that high proficiency students somewhat more frequently used test-taking strategies than low proficiency students. However, both group of participating students were found to similarly employ a wide range of techniques in tackling the reading test, with the most preferable among them being finding the main idea by identifying key words or similar words or phrases in the reading passage as well as in the test items. In addition to the main idea, the students were also trying to look for the clues in the test items and questions. In the event that the students did not fully understand all of the ideas in the passage, they would try to use their background knowledge to make sense of the concepts and unfamiliar words, and made an informed guessing after eliminating the likely wrong items. The finding is accordance with what were found in Nemati (2016) and Ghafoorina’s (2013) study. The data from think-aloud verbal reports revealed that even if high achievers employed a wider range of test-taking strategies than lower achievers, identifying keywords in the option items and in reading passage was found to be the marked preference for both groups of students. Many students in Nemati’s study remarked that with their considerable test-taking experiences and knowledge, especially with standardized tests, the strategy of highlighting keywords was normally employed intuitively so as to look for clue words in test questions to perform some type of inferencing and make most efficient use of context clues to figure out the meanings of unusual words.

Moreover, the findings from the current study can also be supported theoretically by the notion of test-taking strategies proposed by Cohen (1998). He pointed out that there are several factors that affect the use of test-taking strategies such as the intellectual and cognitive characteristics of particular students, lexicogrammatical and sociolinguistic complexity of the test content as well as such affective factors as self-confidence, anxiety, and motivation or an interaction of all these factors. He added that the test-taking strategies are a matter of interrelated set of brain processes which can be automatically triggered once the test-takers expose to the tests. Once activated, background knowledge from working memory and acquired linguistic capacities can work in harmony for the to maximize the possibility of achieving the best test outcomes.
Conclusion

This study examines the relationship between students’ test-taking strategies and their reading comprehension test performance. As evidenced by the findings, test-taking strategies were found to have a significantly positive effect, at least to a certain extent, on reading comprehension test performance regardless of students’ language proficiency levels. The most frequently employed test-taking strategy among high and low proficiency students was finding key words by reading the whole reading passage, the questions as well as in the test items with an aim to identify the main idea, key concepts and facts. Also, the two groups of participating students preferred to match similar words or ideas in the items in multiple choices and those in the reading passage and make a connection between them, which was highly likely to lead them to the correct answer to the question. Although sometimes the students did not really know the exact answer, they would try make an educated guessing by making use of their background knowledge or eliminate the likely wrong answer, and ultimately select the best answer from the remaining ones. Based upon the research results, it can be concluded that the a variety of test-taking strategies were proved to be actually used by the students of all levels and could be considered as useful and practical survival tools that can be used, both deliberately and instinctively, to tackle the challenges or the problems in a language test. It would be logical to say that the more such strategies are employed, the greater success in taking the test the students will achieve.

Recommendation for Further Studies

As noted by Lee (2011), a number of students are still not able to employ the test-taking strategies effectively and appropriately. Moreover, it seems that even if the students are using the same test-taking strategies, they might not equally benefit from using such strategies. Hirano (2009) suggested that preparatory courses should be offered to students to prepare them with test-taking strategies knowledge. Students should be provided the adequate opportunity and practice with different types of tests. This is because students would not only learn how to use test-taking strategies effectively in a test situation, but it is possible that the students might learn to create and devise a new repertoire of personalized tactics that suit them best. As a result, the students could be able to tackle the tests more wisely and confidently.

In order to gain deeper and more insightful understandings, future studies are recommended to be done in experimental studies in other different contexts and with populations of different backgrounds, ages, study levels, and other types of tests such as writing and listening tests. The findings derived from further research might be used to find out more the extent to which test-taking strategies could contribute to language testing and learning.

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References
The Relationship between Test-Taking Strategies

Ketworrachai & Sappapan


Making Sense of Texts: EFL Students’ Intercultural Competence and Interpretation Depth

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Abstract
The study is aimed at exploring Master’s students’ sense-making of various second language (L2) texts and its correlation with interpretation depth and the students’ intercultural competence. The significance of this research lies in the fact that it provides an insight on culture-specific issues challenging for advanced and proficient Ukrainian learners of English when they make sense of L2 vocabulary, interactions, public, mass and social media discourse. The study is based on a questionnaire with open-ended questions filled in by forty Ukrainian Master’s students. The subjects were asked to interpret several English vocabulary items, idioms, linguistic landscape signs as well as mass media and social media texts. The findings suggest that the students’ intercultural competence rests on the information obtained from English textbooks as well as from current mass and social media content. When facing ambiguity or uncertainty, the students tend to show a lack of cultural awareness and resort to first language (L1) assumptions in their sense-making, which may entail a wrong or inaccurate understanding. The students’ interpretation of public, mass and social media texts reveals their insufficient background knowledge of L2 culture, which does not lead to inaccuracies in sense-making but prevents comprehensive understanding of messages. The study argues that Master’s students majoring in English need to enhance their cultural awareness, to develop their intercultural competence and to be prepared for continuous learning of L2 cultural schemata.

Keywords: cultural schemata, discourse, English language, intercultural competence, language unit, sense-making, text

**Introduction**

The goals of foreign language teaching become more challenging as students advance in their linguistic mastery. When learners are at the initial stage of the second language (L2) acquisition, teachers aim at equipping them with standard phrases used to cope with recurrent everyday situations. This stage presupposes mastering the language basics. As communicative situations gradually become ever more diverse and complicated, learners start realizing the multiplicity of communicative situations in a foreign language: they become aware that understanding may be culture-bound, i.e., knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is not enough for sense-making. In other words, L2 texts processing requires more than linguistic competence. In fact, learning a foreign language occurs along with the “relativization of what seems to the learner to be the natural language of their own identities and the realization that these are cultural and socially constructed” (Byram 1997, p.3): learners develop the awareness of culture as a factor that impacts on interpretation of L2 texts and, as a result, develop their intercultural competence.

Though the cultural component is becoming part of English language teaching in Ukraine and specialists are studying how culture may be presented in the classroom (see (Korolova & Popova, 2021)), the significance of this research lies in the fact that it attempts to identify culture-specific problem areas that Ukrainian Master’s students who major in English may face when dealing with English texts of various types. Awareness of cultural differences, culture-related cognitive and affective lacunas may help teacher and students choose appropriate coping strategies. Thus, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

**Question 1:** Are English vocabulary items, dialogical texts, linguistic landscape signs, mass and social media texts equally challenging for Ukrainian Master’s students’ sense-making?

**Question 2:** How much comprehensive is Ukrainian Master’s students’ sense-making of culture-specific meanings?

**Literature Review**

Culture has been defined by many outstanding researchers. According to Sapir (1921), it is “the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives” (p.207). For Goodenough (1957), culture “does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them” (p.36). Culture is not material: it cannot be reduced to some unique food or clothes ‘displayed’ to learners explicitly; it comprises of ‘cultural schemata’, i.e., cultural background knowledge gained through membership in a specific group (Ketchum, 2006). Culture is gradually revealed to language learners through exposure to authentic texts (a book, an item of clothing, a conversation, a piece of news, an image (Marsen, 2006).

According to Almujaiewel (2018), Awayed-Bishara (2015), Bin Towairesh (2021), Gómez Rodríguez (2015), FL teaching materials provide culturally new texts that shift or even shape learners’ perception and interpretation; they are, therefore, conducive to cultural schemata that cover both ‘big C’ culture (literature, geography, history, and arts) and ‘little c’ culture (beliefs, customs, and behavior). Research also shows that texts, lexical items and grammatical constructions of English language teaching (ELT) materials may become a means to actualize cultural and ideological messages. In the ELT classroom, however, culture is still seen by teachers as “a body of factual knowledge” (Bouslama & Benaissi 2018, p.126).

A proficient L2 speaker should master a combination of competencies: linguistic competence (Chomsky, 1965), communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) as well as “transcultural communication competence” (Ting-Toomey 1999) or “intercultural communication competence” (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996). Thus, foreign language students are viewed nowadays as anthropologists (Furstenberg, 2010), and the objective of a proficiency English course lies in providing learners with the tools to extract cultural information from FL teaching materials and real-life texts. Ways to achieve this are highlighted in, for example, Moeller and Nugent (2014) and Chaouche (2016), who discuss reality-based activities used as culture accessing cues and vocabulary-based tasks as a means to identify a lack of intercultural competence. Al Asadi (2020) describes the WebQuest-based method of teaching writing skills to language learners which enhances their intercultural competence. The hands-on approach may be used for theoretical courses as well. The methodology of teaching English word-formation patterns through linguistic landscape signs is elaborated in (Kwelldju, 2021). Bagui and Adder (2020) explore how much Algerian students perceive English literary text from their native cultural perspective and how their reactions to cultural differences are dealt with and transformed into cultural insights by teachers. Razavi and Gilakjani (2020) point out the correlation between teaching cultural content and learners’ reading comprehension” (p.317), which brings the scholars to the
conclusion that “culture is a basic element for learners to learn and understand their surrounding” (p.317). However, there has been no study that could shed light on the correlation between C1 and C2 students’ intercultural competence and their interpretation of different types of L2 culture.

**Method**

The researchers employed the method of an open-ended questionnaire that provides an insight into respondents’ reasoning, which makes the study qualitative. Yet, the questionnaire does not exclude elements of the quantitative method, though the small sample (forty students) prevents from making generalizations.

**Participants**

The research made use of convenience sampling, namely forty Master’s students (aged 21 – 23, native speakers of Ukrainian) of the department for English Philology and Cross-Cultural Communication in Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine, who have been enrolled in the two-year *English Communication Studies and Translation – English, Literature, Translation and Two Western European Languages* program. The Master’s students majoring in English as a second language make up a peculiar group because besides being C1 and C2 English learners, these students also benefit from theoretical courses in Communication Studies, Cultural Studies, Cognitive Linguistics and Cross-Cultural Communication Theory. These courses enhance their language mastery and facilitate the immersion in L2 culture. Thus, the program is designed so as to equip Master’s students with the courses that help navigate interpersonal, corporate, mass, and intercultural communication. At the time (October, 2020), the students were in their first year of the program.

**Instruments**

The questionnaire consisted of three parts, with the first part focusing on testing the students’ awareness and ability to identify and explain culture-specific nuances of English lexemes and idioms.

The second part was designed to examine how much the students’ stereotypes influenced their interpretation of dialogue. Lexemes, idioms, and dialogue in the first two parts of the questionnaire were thematically bound to the RELATIONSHIP concept.

The third part of the questionnaire was aimed at examining the students’ ability to apply their background cultural knowledge to the interpretation of public signs, mass media and social media texts. The students were asked: 1) to explain meanings encoded in two linguistic landscape items, 2) to make sense of four images from newspapers (two photos of BLM protests and two caricatures related to the coronavirus pandemic), 3) to comment on the message of Gal Gadot’s *Imagine* video launched during the lockdown and to suggest possible reasons for audiences’ negative feedback.

**Research Procedures**

The data collection was conducted in a two-hour long session. The students received a questionnaire in Google Classroom. It is important to note that the students were emphatically encouraged to share their thoughts in their answers. They were also informed that the responses would not be assessed or graded in any way.

**Results**

**Making Sense of Culture-Specific Lexemes and Idioms**

This part of the questionnaire started with the following questions:

- a) What does *nuclear family* mean in English?
- b) What does *extended family* mean in English?
- c) Which of the two terms is closer to *родина* in Ukrainian and why?

The researchers expected to receive the correct answers from the students whose English level ranges from C1 to C2. The expectations were met: while answers to (a) and (b) were up-to-the-point (e.g., “a family that consists only of a mother, a father and their children” and “two parents, children and all their relatives”), (c) stimulated more detailed answers that involved both cultural and linguistic information (quotes from the students’ answers are given without any changes):
Extended family is closer to the Ukrainian «родина» while nuclear family is more «сім'я». The first one probably derives from the Ukrainian word «рід» that includes all the relatives, distant ones as well and describes the whole “evolution” of the family.

In my opinion, the second definition [extended family] is closer to родина in Ukrainian, because, in spite of current tendency, in Ukraine a lot of families still celebrate holidays in the family circle, with all the relatives we have. A lot of grandparents help their children to care of grandsons and granddaughters, many of them live together and share everyday life. In my family we have strong relationships with grandparents and aunts, and even cousins. We usually try to help each other or just to communicate occasionally.

Another set of lexical items to comment on contained the following lexical items:

a) A starter marriage
b) A stormy relationship
c) One’s significant other

(a) and (c) proved to be challenging. One may assume that nuclear and extended family are mentioned in ELT materials; stormy relationship is metaphorical and quite transparent. Starter marriage as a concept is, however, not part of Ukrainian culture, which remains rather traditional and views marriage as a long-term/life-long relationship between a man and a woman. So, nine students did not come up with any explanation of a starter marriage, 23 participants got involved in a ‘guessing game’, each of them arriving with a varying degree of accuracy to the actual meaning:

- new marriage? (not sure)
- a couple that has just married, I guess
- No idea, probably something connected with the first marriage

Only eight students gave the correct definition without any markers of uncertainty (first unsuccessful marriage that does not last long; the first marriage of a person), yet these answers cannot be considered exhaustive, since they miss out on several significant details related to social and material aspects this phenomenon incorporates:

Exclusively refers to a couple’s initial marriage, probably at age 24 or less, involving partners with little income and assets. May or may not end with children; will likely not end with more assets than when it began. One or more of the partners may have an advanced degree at the time of divorce. Subsequent marriages are usually to partners higher up the socio-economic scale. (Starter Marriage, n. d.)

One’s significant other is a circumlocution for a spouse, a life partner or a lover used colloquially to keep marital status, relationship status, gender identity or sexual orientation unspecified. It is noteworthy that though avoiding discriminatory language is an official trend in Ukrainian mass media and political discourse, Ukrainians still hold traditionalist views on relationships. In addition, this collocation does not typically appear in EFL textbooks, so some students failed to define it, and either admitted their ignorance (I don’t know) or offered a fallacious definition:

- one defines the other? (not sure)

It’s the first time I stumbled upon this idiom. Perhaps, it implies the relationship in the couple where one partner is more authoritative than the other.

Yet, 36 out of the 40 respondents managed to give the correct definition:

- somebody with whom a person has a romantic relationship in which there is a perspective
- a person with whom one is in a serious romantic relationship
- I guess it is similar to sayings like “one’s second half” in our countries, if you get what I mean.

The third set of questions required commenting on the meaning of the following sayings:

a) Blood is thicker than water.
b) Two shorten the road.
c) Good walls make good neighbors.

(a) means that “family connections are always more important than other types of relationship” (Cambridge
Dictionary, n.d.) and is paralleled by an equivalent Ukrainian saying (кров не вода, literally blood is not water) built on the same metaphor. It is not surprising that the students had no difficulty offering the correct definition.

(b) comes from Irish and is based on the road metaphor to suggest that “companionship makes life better” (Phelan, 2016). This saying proved to be less transparent to the students: two admitted the failure to make sense of it; the rest of the answers were more or less correct, e.g.,

- it is always good to have a companion, a soulmate
- being together is easier to do anything, to live.

Some students focused primarily on the companion’s help in an activity rather than the mere presence of a companion:

- two people together can achieve something faster than on their own
- it is better to do some difficult job with a friend/partner than alone.

Interpreting (c), which relates to the English concept of privacy, five failed to make sense of the incorporated metaphor and stated this blatantly. 25 respondents, however, decoded the message:

- privacy is something that we should value and makes us cherish one another
- you need to respect the privacy of other people
- you will get along better with people if you stay out of each other’s business.

Ten students used their background knowledge, which resulted in misinterpretation of the metaphor. The example below shows that a student relies on the background knowledge about social segregation in the USA to make sense of the saying:

- I guess it means that if you buy a good expensive house in a nice district, your neighbors will be successful and intelligent people, not some random folk from ghettos. I heard it is so in the USA.

Two answers show the misinterpretation of the adjective good: in the saying, good means secure, ensuring privacy, while the students interpret the good as a synonym of moral, benevolent:

- It is important to be a good person yourself and this will help you to attract good people into your life.
- When you do something good for your neighboring person it also benefits yourself.

Making Sense of a Dialogical Text

As our experience of teaching the Communication Studies course shows, one of the most challenging tasks for students is to realize that their interpretation of interactions in L2 may be fallacious because they arrive at precipitous conclusions grounded on their L1 cultural stereotypes. Yet, these intuitive and hasty inferences provide researchers with ample material that contains the examples of stereotypical thinking and cultural schemata.

The questionnaire offered the students an excerpt from a dialogue where a participant’s gender identity is not self-evident. The students’ interpretation, therefore, sheds light onto their gender stereotypes and onto their awareness of the impact stereotypes have on perception and interpretation.

The dialogue occurs between a mother and her daughter, who has a baby, Kate. The daughter left for a night out and asked her mother to take care of Kate. The daughter returns home later than expected and has an argument with her irritated mother:

- “I drove home at high speed, the roads clear of rush-hour traffic because it was so late. Mum was tightlipped and suspicious when I arrived.
- ‘What kind of time do you call this?’ she demanded.
- ‘Sorry,’ I gasped. ‘I lost track of time.’
- ‘I’ve fed Kate,’ she told me.
- ‘Thanks, Mum.’
- ‘Five times.’
- ‘Thanks, Mum.’
- ‘And I’ve changed her.’
- ‘Thanks, Mum.’
- ‘Three times.’
- ‘Thanks, Mum.’
‘I hope you’re grateful.’
‘Oh, I am, Mum.’
‘She’s not my child, you know.’
‘I know, Mum.’
‘My childrearing days are over.’
‘I know, Mum.’

Then she was really suspicious. Why was I being so nice? Hurriedly, I raised my voice at her. ‘She’s your flesh and blood too, you know,’ I told her” (Keyes, 2005, pp.223-224).

The students’ task was to comment on the relationship between the participants and the subject of their conversation.

While the baby-sitting context was identified correctly by all the forty students, only ten showed awareness that the narrator’s gender identity is ambiguous:

A dialogue takes place between a mother and her daughter or son, who have left their mother to look after their child. The mother is very indignant that he/she was not at home all day and she had to sit with the child all day. The participants are a mother and her son or daughter. Mother is dissatisfied with the behavior of her son/daughter. She doesn’t like the fact that she has to look after her granddaughter.

Another ten participants decided that the dialogue occurs between a mother and a son:
The participants are mom and her son. This dialogue [is] about a son who arrived home late while his mother was watching her granddaughter.
The dialogue is about a young, probably divorced man, and his mom, who is taking care of his child while he’s at work till the late night.

Twenty students, however, wrote that it’s a dialogue between two women: a mother and a daughter. The last one has a newborn baby and is back home at late hours. Grandmother (mum in dialogue) is furious about having to look after the baby while her daughter is hanging out somewhere.

Though this interpretation coincides with the actual situation in the story, the dialogue does not provide any clue for this interpretation.

Making Sense of Linguistic Landscape Signs

The students were asked to comment on the meanings of the two signboards and the means employed to deliver them:

![Figure 1. Signboards of eateries offered in the questionnaire](image)

All students recognized the NY (New York) reference in (a), which catches the eye at once:
Frankly speaking, I don’t see any concrete coding in this photo besides the NYC name.
Few (three out of forty) were able to discern the word ‘tonic’: 
*This bar can offer drinks with tonic that is a key ingredient for all sorts of drinks. Tonic is a specific kind of water typically used for some alcohol cocktails.*

None, however, related tonic as a usual ingredient for cocktails to New York City, known for its cocktail culture (A Brief History of the Cocktail, n.d.).

Sign (b) proved to be more transparent for interpretation, the most exhaustive comment being 
The “w” looks like two wine glasses, the “t” looks like a corkscrew. Because of the “t” being blended and phonetic similarity, the collocation resembles a phrase “Why not?” as if inviting the customer for a glass of wine, since he/she themselves may think that there is no substantial reason to refuse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students*</th>
<th>Component explicated</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>“Wine NoT” alludes to Why not?</td>
<td><em>I guess, this signboard means “why not drink wine?”</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>“W” is styled so as to stand for two wine glasses</td>
<td><em>Two wine glasses are used to intertwine with each other and represent the letter “W”. This is a great idea as you don’t need to read the whole signboard to understand that you can have a drink there.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“T” is styled so as to look like a corkscrew</td>
<td><em>The first letter W is written in the shape of two wineglasses and the last letter (T) of the second word is written in the shape of a corkscrew.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The signboard reads “Wine No1”</td>
<td><em>The pun in the slogan is used. “Wine no 1” can also be read as “why not?”. It encourages people to come in and drink wine.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The total is 56 (more than the number of respondents) because the students tended to mention more than one element of the signboard in their answers.

Thus, the students focused their attention on the verbal component of the sign that draws on the phonetic similarity with the *why not?* phrase; visuals attracted less attention, especially if they occur in the final position, which is the ‘T’ in the righthand part of the sign (probably because both the English and the Ukrainians read from left to right).

**Making Sense of Mass Media Texts**

The next question of the questionnaire contained two mass media images related to Black Lives Matter protests that caught the public eye in 2020. The students were asked to comment on the characters, their actions, the message of the images as well as to indicate the elements that they used as cues for interpretation.

![Figure 2. Mass media images offered in the questionnaire](image_url)
Most students (except four) successfully decoded the context and the sense of the newspaper photos (a) and (b). To interpret (a), the students paid attention mainly to the verbal component (the inscription on the monument and the graffiti) and then the protesting gestures of the people in the photo. Yet, the accuracy and depth of explanations varied. Here are the examples of the correct, but superficial answers (these make up the majority of the interpretations (36 out of 40):

*In the picture we see peaceful protesters who stand against racism. We can understand it by their pose and the writing on the monument.*
*The way people are standing indicates that they support Black Lives Matter Movement. However, I don’t know why they are standing in front of Churchill.*

Four students showed profound background knowledge that helped them to go deeper in their explanations, e.g.,

*BLM protesters deface the statue of Winston Churchill in London, trying to draw the government’s attention both to the racial problem at hand (police killing of George Floyd in the USA) and hypocrisy supported by the monument (Winston Churchill was indeed a racist and stood behind several war crimes, but this part of his biography is mostly ignored). The location is easy to guess by the buildings in the background. This act is probably a part of a big anti-racism demonstration.*

(b) was more manageable due to the Black-Lives-Matter slogans on the participants’ T-shirts, e.g.,
*I don’t know the person on the second picture, perhaps it is in the USA, something connected to Afroamericans and racism. There are signs on the t-shirts of the people.*

In fact, a challenge for sense-making in (b) was the historical figure of General Robert E. Lee, whose monument was defaced by the BLM activists. Only two students were familiar with the commander of the Confederate States Army and used the background information in their comments:

*…the location is the USA. I am not sure who is portrayed there, but it is probably Robert E. Lee, who was a confederate and a slave owner. The protesters are trying to express their hurt over the fact that the government ignores their issues, and instead commemorates racist historical figures.*

*If I’m not mistaken it is The Robert Lee Monument in Virginia that has become a center of the demonstration. According to the slogans of the T-shirt of one man No justice No peace Black lives matter, we can understand that this picture also refers to George Floyd protests.*

**Making Sense of Internet Memes**

The Internet memes chosen for the questionnaire related to the coronavirus, the phenomenon that shook up the world in 2020. (c) stands for the virus itself and is known as *Corona-chan/Wuhan-chan* (only one student used *Corona-chan* in the answer), while (d) uses the *Corona-chan* character wearing the Trump-style wig to encode criticism of Donald Trump’s reluctance to adopt restricting policies to stop the spread of the virus.

![Figure 3. Internet memes offered in the questionnaire](image)
The students easily identified (c) as a representation of the virus. They primarily used the verbal components of the image as prompts and only some of the respondents (23 out of 40) also mentioned visuals:

To be honest I don’t really understand the intent behind this picture, what I can guess is this cartoon is impersonating the corona virus, and how vicious it is, judging from the bubble text…
I can assume it is a personification of a coronavirus (the beer is a hint). “I will suffocate your lungs” – the virus causes pneumonia and often patients cannot breathe on their own, they are connected to a ventilator.
The picture sends us the message to what extent Corona virus is dangerous and what it can do to our lungs. Here pun is used: the shortened name of Coronavirus is Corona, which is the name of beer. What is more, the girl’s hair is bunched up in two buns, which look like the coronavirus’s molecules.

(d) turned out to be less transparent for interpretation. Four students failed to write anything at all to comment on the meme. 32 students, who recognized Trump’s hairstyle but did not follow Trump’s actions at the beginning of the pandemic, managed to make sense of the meme only partially: some wrote that the meme is related to the USA or Trump, yet could not be more specific:

[d] showcases the development of COVID-19 situation in the US. People widely protested against quarantine regime and broke the rules of social distancing. Moreover, (...) this anti-quarantine movement was not appropriately controlled by the government, contributing to the rising amount of infected people.
I think this picture can relate to the presidential election in the USA.
The message that the picture communicates is not quite clear to me. This is due to the fact that I’m not really into politics. Perhaps, this is somehow connected with Trump’s positive test for the virus.

Only four students had the background knowledge of President Trump’s initial views on the pandemic and his wariness of any restricting policies aimed at curbing the virus:
A caricature of Trump’s statement about the non-existence of the virus.
Anime-coronavirus wearing Trump’s wig insists on people leaving their homes. It refers to the actions of Donald Trump during the pandemic of Covid-19.

Making Sense of Social Media (YouTube) Texts
The last text in the questionnaire tested the students’ cultural knowledge that comprises both information on the 20th-century English-language pop culture and its actualization during the coronavirus outbreak.

The students were asked to follow the link to the YouTube project by Gal Gadot (bgcyclops, 2020), who invited other celebrities to sing Imagine, the famous song written by John Lennon in 1971. The respondents were asked the following questions:

a) What do you know about the song?
b) What message did Gal Gadot and her friends intend to deliver?
c) The audience vehemently condemned the video for a number of reasons. What, in your opinion, were the reasons?

It should be noted that the answers received to (c) can only partly be considered valid for the research because, since the students watched the video individually on YouTube, five of them wrote that they got interested and had a look through viewers’ comments, which undoubtedly influenced the students’ feedback.

Table 2 contains the quantitative data on the student’s answers about their background knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Answers to the question about prior knowledge of the song</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. **Answers to the question about the message of Gadot’s video**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>to cheer the fans up</th>
<th>to bring people together</th>
<th>to support people and reach out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 offers quantitative data on the students’ understanding of the audience’s negativity.

**Table 4. Answers to the question about reasons for criticism of the video**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>callousness and acceptance of social inequality</th>
<th>celebrities’ hypocrisy</th>
<th>celebrities’ wrong choice of supportive actions</th>
<th>poor quality of singing and video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples of the students’ comments on audiences’ criticism are below:

(1) Callousness and acceptance of social inequality: *I believe that it is somewhat offensive to the people who were impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak the most – people who lost all their sources of income, who can barely afford their living and those who must serve the country as “front-line workers”. There is no way that listed people can listen to the wealthy billionaires (...) sing the lines “imagine no possessions” from their mansions. Considering all this, the message “we are all in this together” expressed by Gal Gadot rings incredibly false and hypocritical, because – not really. Some people have it much worse.*

(2) Celebrities’ hypocrisy: *The video was criticized because it was of no use and everyone started saying that it was just PR from the stars / These are celebrities having a lot of money and great houses but wishing for the opposite or pretending they understand ordinary people.*

(3) Celebrities’ wrong choice of supportive actions: *They could easily donate to any of the charities that work to help those affected or in need, or try and promote wearing masks, or just use their platforms a bit more wisely and much more direct than just signing a song via video on YouTube.*

(4) Poor quality of singing and video: *I think they were criticized for their singing skills (because sometimes it was hard to listen to).*

**Discussion**

The students’ responses to the questionnaire show that the depth of their interpretation of L2 items varies: the students’ comments on individual English lexical items from the thematic field RELATIONSHIPS reveal the role of ELT materials that introduce learners to some cultural specifics of interpersonal relations. The comparative questions in the questionnaire enable the students to show their ability to see similarities and differences between ‘equivalent’ English and Ukrainian lexemes. Yet, no ELT textbook contains the entire set of lexical items from a thematic field. In the current research, the set of the ‘missing’ lexemes was represented by *starter marriage* and *one’s significant other*. *Starter marriage* verbalizes a concept foreign to the students’ L1 culture. *One’s significant other* is used to comply with communicative norms that are not typical of the students’ speech communities; it is part of ‘inclusive language’ employed to avoid references to stereotypes and preconceptions that may offend or demean people. The students’ interpretation of unfamiliar vocabulary relies on their L1 cultural assumptions.

The students’ interpretation of sayings demonstrates that sense-making is efficient if the students’ native language offers the equivalent or draws on a similar metaphor. In the latter case, students deduce the meaning of a saying correctly. Yet, if an idiom focuses on a concept which does not exist in students’ native culture (e.g., ‘privacy’), students primarily draw on the knowledge of their native culture when inferring its meaning.

Making sense of interaction between family members caused less uncertainty and doubts among students, probably due to the familiar setting and assumed universality of family relations and roles. The students were lulled into complacency and tended to extrapolate their cultural stereotypes without being aware that the text offered an
information gap and that they filled it in at their discretion. Thus, since in Ukrainian culture it is primarily mothers who take care of children, in case the childminder’s gender is not specified as male, the students’ interpretation drew on the ‘by-default’ assumption.

The students’ sense-making of texts from public, mass and social media discourse shows that they have accumulated sufficient background knowledge to make sense of present-day texts from these domains: the Master’s students noticed components and their interrelation in multimodal texts, recognized the general message, and showed rather profound knowledge of the current events. Yet, they missed out on the elements that require more profound culture-specific background knowledge, e.g., associating New York with cocktail culture, correlating events or personalities from the past with current political and social trends in L2 culture. Cognitive lacunas prevented the students from the comprehensive understanding of texts built on intertextuality such as Gadot’s *Imagine* project, which illustrates the fact that, when transferred to a new signifying system, old texts require re-articulation of the ethic (Kristeva, 1980): Lennon’s message was received favorably by the public in 1971, but the same message delivered by celebrities in 2020 sparkled negative reactions. Yet, the students identified correctly the causes of the project’s failure, which shows their social and emotional intelligence. Thus, the Master’s students’ interpretation of L2 mass and social media texts was overall accurate but incomplete: the students recognized and made sense of the message in general but failed to see deeper layers rooted in the culture of L2 community. When having difficulties interpreting a text, the students relied on their L1 cultural stereotypes and assumptions.

**Conclusion**

The exploratory research approaches the development of Master’s students’ intercultural competence through examining their sense-making of different types of L2 items, which determines the originality of the study. The analysis has revealed the following regularities in the subjects’ interpretation of English vocabulary, interpersonal interactions, public, mass and social media texts. Lexemes introduced in ELT materials pose no difficulty for the students and, when encouraged, the students have no difficulty explaining their culture-specific features. Yet, the interpretation accuracy decreases considerably and L1 influence strengthens if the English language unit verbalizes a culture-specific concept absent from textbooks or draws on a metaphor foreign to the students’ native culture. A similar process is registered for dialogical texts, whose interpretation follows ‘by-default’ sense-making: the students are not aware of their cultural bias and rely on stereotypes of Ukrainian culture when making sense of interpersonal interaction. Linguistic landscape signs and texts from mass media and social media do not pose a challenge to interpreting in general because the students follow ongoing events in the L2 community. Yet, the students do not have sufficient L2 culture-specific background knowledge and, therefore, their understanding of a text message lacks depth. Thus, teaching L2 to Master’s students who major in English should be focused on enhancing their cultural awareness and intercultural competence as well as prepare them for the permanent development of the latter.

**Recommendation**

The results of the study suggest that EFL teachers of Master’s students majoring in English should (1) make students aware of their L1 cultural schemata and help them develop a critical attitude to their precipitous judgments, (2) teach them to approach every text as a phenomenon made up of many meaningful components (images, lexemes) and many layers of meanings, and (3) make it a student’s habit to discover L2 culture on their own.

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Exploring Learners’ and Teachers’ Preferences Regarding Written Corrective Feedback Types in Improving Learners’ Writing Skill

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Abstract:
The current research is significant. It aims to improve learners’ writing and facilitate their academic achievement. This study examines learners’ and teachers’ preferences to written corrective feedback types in enhancing EFL learners writing. The main research question is to investigate the likes of teaches and learners regarding written corrective feedback types in enhancing learners’ writing skills. The learners’ questionnaire and the teachers’ questionnaire were the instruments. The respondents responded to the questionnaires. The submission of the research instruments took place on November 2021 at Zaida Ben Aissa middle school. The findings have shown that learners prefer their writing to be corrected via unfocused, direct feedback while teachers like to use indirect, focused feedback on their learners’ writings.

Keywords: direct and indirect written feedback, EFL learners, focused and unfocused written feedback, preferences, writing skill

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Exploring Learners’ and Teachers’ Preferences

Reguieg & Hamitouche

Introduction:
According to Klimova (2013), writing is a crucial productive skill. Factors impact the student’s piece of writing while, pushing them to make errors. One of these factors is preferences that affect students’ writing. What constitutes well-written feedback to learners and how they prefer their writing to be corrected can impact how well they do in writing (Greenberg, 1988).

Researchers believe that written feedback is an instructional tool that plays a role in helping learners to improve their writing (Ferris, 2004). Bitchener and Knoch (2008, 2009) concluded that learners whose papers are provided with written feedback improve in their writing in comparison with those who had no feedback. However, the provision of written feedback is complicated. Aridah, Atmowardoyo, & Salija (2017) explained the complexity of written corrective feedback by saying that writing covers various aspects (organization, content, style, grammar, vocabulary and, mechanics). They further assumed that teachers’ correction of all the elements of writing requires time and energy. Teachers provide comments and corrections on their learners’ writing, but still, learners do not benefit from them. We notice a gap or a mismatch between the types of written feedback teachers provide and the types of written corrective feedback learners prefer in their writing (Calvalcanti, 1990).

Since students’ preferences of feedback may influence the effectiveness of feedback (Shulz, 1996), it is necessary to identify students’ choices on their writing. The study of Lithuania (2015) showed that although research tackled written feedback from different perspectives, learners’ preferences of feedback are not investigated. Research on learners’ and teachers’ preferences was not conducted, mainly in the Algerian context. This research explores learners’ and teachers’ preferences regarding written corrective feedback types.

Aboubakr (2016) believes that focusing on learners’ preferences towards written feedback can foster their writing. That is to say, investigating what learners prefer can raise teachers’ awareness of their learning styles. It is crucial to examine how learners wish to be corrected. Teachers of English also have preferences to remedy learners’ writing; some want to correct all errors while others leave errors uncorrected (Noora, 2008).

This research explores teachers’ and learners’ preferences regarding written feedback types. Few studies, mainly in the Algerian context, have neglected to examine the preferences of both teachers and learners regarding what type of registered corrective feedback that teachers use and learners expect. Little research has dealt teachers’ and learners’ preferences (Katayama, 2008).

Investigating first pupils’ preferences can tell a lot about how learners prefer to learn writing. Some learners like to be corrected, while others prefer to self-correct their errors. Preferences can have an effect as it shows what teachers believe how feedback can be effective for learners, including teachers’ and learners’ voices in written feedback research to address their preferences (Balachandran, 2017). Ferris (2003) suggested that a mutual benefit can occur if there is an attempt to establish a correlation between teachers’ and learners’ preferences regarding written feedback. Wang (2010) said that teachers should how their learners think about their learning preferences. Also, Leki (1991) asserted that being aware of students’ preferences...
and learning styles can help teachers’ decision-making. That is to say, teachers can select written feedback types that facilitate the learning. The objective of this research is to explore what kind of written feedback teachers and learners prefer. We formulated two research questions:

1. What type (or types) of written corrective feedback do teachers prefer to correct learners’ writing?
2. What type (or types) of written corrective feedback do learners prefer being corrected?

This research attempts to trigger teachers’ awareness towards learners’ preferences. Exploring learners’ likes in learning is a preliminary step that can help and contribute to fruitful learning.

**Literature Review:**

**Written Corrective Feedback Types in Writing**

Investigating the efficacy of written corrective feedback in meliorating learners’ writing has been a controversial topic in research. This has led to the rise of two opposing views towards error correction. Research showed that written feedback on students’ writing is harmful, and teachers’ written comments make learners stigmatized (Horowitz, 1986; Johns, 1995; James, 1998). Several studies were undertaken on the efficacy of written feedback on improving writing and changing the earlier views towards written feedback (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008; Farrokhi & Sattapour, 2011; Hanakour & Izumi, 2012; Hyland, 2011; Shintani, Ellis & Suzuki, 2014; Van Beuningen, De Jong & Kuken, 2012). All these studies agreed that teacher correction has a positive effect on learners’ writing. Ellis (2008) explained written corrective feedback types or dichotomies.

**Direct Written Corrective Feedback**

This type of feedback requires teachers to highlight the error and provide its correction. Teachers can correct through direct feedback by: crossing out unnecessary words, inserting a missing word, writing the correct format above or near the error. Immediate feedback has many advantages: it can help learners to reduce the number of mistakes in their writing, it provides explicit guidance to them on how to correct their mistakes, it also promotes the acquisition of specific grammatical features, it provides detailed, immediate information about the correct version, and enables learners to notice the gap between their current level and the proper format (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010).

**Indirect Written Corrective Feedback**

Indirect feedback indicates students’ errors in their writing without giving the correction. Giving indirect feedback involves underlying or circling, or showing the omissions of the mistakes (Ferris et. al. 2010). Indirect feedback is beneficial in many ways: it leads to guided learning and problem-solving (Lalande, 1982), it contributes to reflection about the linguistic forms, it leads to life-long learning, and it engages learners in solving and correcting their mistakes. A study conducted by Ellis (2009) and Ferris (2004) indicated that students who received indirect feedback reflect on teachers’ comments on their writing than those who received direct feedback.

**Focused and Unfocused Written Corrective Feedback**

Teachers can correct all learners’ errors in writing, and that’s called unfocused feedback. Teachers repair all types of errors found in learners’ writing. For instance, teachers do not only
fix preposition errors or definite/indefinite article errors; they correct all errors. Unfocused feedback is difficult for teachers because it takes both time and energy. It is also challenging for learners because they cannot process all the fixed errors at once. Focused feedback, on the other hand, can be fruitful as learners may process and learn from teachers’ selective corrections on specific errors, most fundamental errors. It is also practical because it enables learners to reflect on their writing (Ellis, 2008).

**Meta-linguistic Written Corrective Feedback**

It consists of providing learners with explicit comments. The comments may take the form of error codes or abbreviations under the error in the text or the margin. For example, article ---art/preposition ---prep / wrong word --- WW. Another form is the provision of meta-linguistic explanations of learners’ mistakes in writing. That is explaining to learners the mistakes they have committed. Meta-linguistic feedback is time-consuming. It requires teachers to possess sufficient meta-linguistic knowledge to write clear, accurate explanations.

**Studies on Learners’ Preferences Regarding Written Corrective Feedback Types**

Several studies explored learners’ and teachers’ preferences towards the different types of feedback. The studies have shown differing findings and discrepancies. Radecki and Swales (1988) concluded that learners expect their teachers’ written feedback on all their errors. Similarly, Leki (1991) reported that they preferred their teachers to correct all their mistakes. Enginarlar’s study (1993) also indicated that learners prefer unfocused feedback and want all their errors to be fixed. The survey of Hedgcock and Leftkowitz (1994) concluded that learners favored teachers’ corrections and comments.

Schulz (1996) investigated teachers’ and learners’ beliefs to written corrective feedback. The findings indicated that learners preferred direct, explicit corrections on their errors in writing rather than any other type of feedback. Diab (2005) conducted a study investigating 156 EFL university learners’ preferences on their teacher’s written feedback. Findings showed that most students preferred the teacher to cross out the error and report its correction as “the best teacher feedback technique” (p. 38). Also, findings revealed that learners want all their mistakes to be corrected.

Some recent studies showed that learners prefer direct written corrective feedback on their writing. For instance, Chen, Nassaji and, Liu (2016) investigated what types of written feedback, learners favor. The results showed that learners favored direct corrections on their writing. The study of Zhang, Chen, Hu, and Ketwan (2021) indicated that learners want to be correct through direct feedback.

Some discrepancies appeared in terms of findings. Lee (2008) showed that learners favored direct feedback whereas Ferris (2003) revealed that learners preferred indirect feedback, on their writing. Bitchener (2012) explained that factors could intervene in the way learners prefer their errors to be corrected. One of these factors is the proficiency level of the learners. Direct feedback is suitable for learners with lower proficiency levels and with limited linguistic knowledge because it is more effective for their writing. Sheen (2007) agreed that proficiency
level could be an indicator of learners’ preferences towards teachers’ feedback in the sense that he believes that indirect feedback is more suitable for learners with better analytic ability.

**Methods:**
This study investigates pupils’ and teachers’ preferences regarding written corrective feedback types.

**Participants: Teachers and Learners**
The participants were middle school learners. They have been learning English as a foreign language since their first year at middle school and teachers of English at middle school in Zaida Ben Aissa Middle School, Hadjout, Tipaza in November 2021. Teachers from the same middle school and other teachers from the other middle schools took part in the study. The participants were selected via a random probability sampling. All participants had equal chances to take part in this study.

**Research Instruments**
We selected “Teacher questionnaire of written corrective feedback types preferences” and “Learner Questionnaire.” “Learners’ questionnaire” aims to explore what type of written feedback they prefer their writing to be corrected. Teachers’ questionnaire on written corrective feedback types preferences aims to investigate teachers’ practices regarding written feedback and which type they practice and believe is more effective in improving learners’ writing. Learners’ questionnaire was translated from English to Arabic by a professional translator; this is because learners at middle school do not possess the required linguistic ability to understand the items of the questionnaire and respond to them. Teachers’ questionnaire is about what type or types of written feedback they use in correcting learners’ writing.

The research tool selected was a questionnaire of “Written Corrective Feedback Scale” of (Aridah, Atmowardoyo, & Salija, 2017). The instrument was the same for both teachers and students. The differences lay in the wording and to whom it was addressed. This tool is a multiple choice item questionnaire in which learners choose ONLY one option by crossing (X). The option they select means their preference (what type of feedback they prefer) and how they like their writing to be corrected (direct, indirect, focused or, unfocused feedback). The questionnaire contained ten items; each item was about one type of feedback (Direct Feedback, Indirect Feedback, Focused Feedback and, Unfocused Feedback). Each allowed learners and teachers to choose one of the four options that represent their preference; what they use when correcting their learners’ papers.

**Research Procedures**
The current study took place at a middle school. We administered pupils’ questionnaires that were translated into Arabic. Learners put a cross on their preferred answer. When they finish, the researcher collects them. Some of the teachers took a hard copy of the questionnaire, while others received an electronic copy via emails to facilitate the data collection process. The respondents also put a cross on their preferred answer.
**Results:**
This section aims to present the primary data gathered about teachers’ and learners’ preferences in figures, tables and percentages (%).

**Data Gathered from Learners’ Questionnaire**

*Item 1: when giving feedback on my written work, I like my teacher to:*

**Table 1. Students’ preferences on direct written corrective types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide the correct linguistic form or structure on my errors.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Direct feedback)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To implicitly signal the errors and let me do the correction myself</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Indirect feedback)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To select specific errors to be corrected and ignore others.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focused feedback)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To comment on and correct all the committed errors.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfocused feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item one attempts to investigate which type of written corrective feedback learners want their writing to be corrected. Table one showed that 60% of learners choose direct written corrective feedback.

![Figure 1. Students’ preferences on direct written corrective feedback](image)

**Item 2: when I make errors in my writing, I want my teacher:**

**Table 2. Students’ preferences on unfocused written corrective feedback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To cross out the errors and provide the correct form</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Direct feedback)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to identify the mistakes without giving the proper form</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Indirect feedback)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to correct some errors, not all of them</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focused feedback)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Item two aims at exploring which other types of written corrective feedback learners prefer. Table 2 shows that 70% of learners selected unfocused feedback.

### Data Gathered from Teacher’s Questionnaire

**Item 01: When I give feedback on my learners’ written work, I like:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide the correct linguistic form or the structure above or near the linguistic error my learners made. (Direct feedback)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To implicitly signal the errors and let my learners do the correction by themselves (Indirect feedback)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To select specific errors to be corrected and ignore other errors. (Focused feedback)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To randomly comment on and correct all my learners’ writing problems Unfocused feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item one attempted to explore which type of written corrective feedback they prefer when correcting learners’ written works. Table 1 showed that most teachers (67.5%) liked to practice indirect written corrective feedback on learners’ written errors.
Item 2: When my learners make errors in their writing, I prefer:

Table 2. Teachers’ preferences on focused written corrective feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide the correct linguistic form or structure on my learners’ errors. (Direct feedback)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To implicitly signal the errors and let my learners do the correction themselves (Indirect feedback)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To select specific errors to be corrected and ignore others. (Focused feedback)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To comment on and correct all my learners’ committed errors. Unfocused feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 2. Teachers’ preferences on focused written corrective feedback

Item two explored how teachers prefer to correct their learners’ writing. Table 2 shows that most of them (60%) like to practice focused feedback.

The study showed a tendency towards direct written corrective feedback and unfocused written feedback. Learners (60%) prefer their teacher to give direct written corrective feedback on their writing. They like their teachers to highlight the grammar error by underlining, circling as well as providing the suitable form above or near the error. Learners also prefer teachers’ direct corrections. The findings showed that 70% of learners prefer unfocused written feedback. They desire all the significant mistakes and all types of mistakes to be corrected. They also want their teacher to write in the margin next to every mistake they make. Few learners (10%) favor the focused feedback. Few learners (15% and 5%) preferred indirect feedback. They do not like when their teacher implicitly signals the errors and let them self-correct. They also do not choose their errors in writing to be identified without providing the correct form. The results indicated that teachers provide two types of feedback: focused feedback and indirect feedback. Teachers favor and practice the indirect feedback on their learners’ writing. Teachers (67.5%) like to indicate that an error has been made by underlining, circling, crossing out, or using codes without correcting. This study showed that the other type of feedback that teachers prefer to use is focused feedback. Teachers (60%) prefer focused feedback on their learners’ writing because they do not like to correct all errors but rather select the most significant aspects in writing to be updated. Teachers (5% and 7.5%) favored the unfocused written corrective feedback. Those teachers do not like to repair all types of errors. Few teachers (7.5% and 7.5%) provide direct...
feedback on their learners’ writing. They do not prefer to correct all errors for improved accuracy; they practice the immediate feedback by stating that a mistake has been made by underlining, crossing out the mistake, or by circling the error and providing its correct form or in the margin.

**Discussion**

In this section, we will answer the main research questions. As far as learners’ preferences are concerned, they favor direct feedback because it helps them learn new grammatical forms in a faster, more straightforward way. Through providing the proper format, learners avoid formulating wrong hypotheses that may affect their writing accuracy. Direct feedback can be effective in improving writing. It excludes any ambiguity on the part of learners. Learners will have no anxiety or confusion in finding out the right correct form. The finding is correlated with (Schulz, 1996; Diab, 2005; Lee, 2008; Hedgcock & Leftkowitz, 1994; Chen, Nassaji & Liu, 2016; Zhang, Chen, Hu, & Ketwan, 2021).

We explored that learners also like when their teacher corrects all their errors; they expect unfocused feedback on their writing. The findings correspond with the research of (Radecki & Swales, 1988; Enginarlar, 1993; Jahbel, Latief, Cahyono, & Abdalla, 2020). The findings of this study showed that learners favored the unfocused feedback i.e., they like when all the errors corrected, for unfocused feedback contributes to learning. This finding is similar to (Leki, 1991; Cohen, 1987; Cumming, 1995; Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 1998; Lee, 2004; Jahbel, et al., 2020). There is no correlation in this study between teachers’ and learners’ preferences regarding written feedback types. The finding corresponds with the investigation of (Cohen & Calvalcanti, 1990). The results of this study indicate that learners prefer both direct and unfocused written corrective feedback, whereas teachers favor indirect and focused written corrective feedback. Learners’ expectations do not match with teachers’ preferences. Hamer (2000, 2004) assured that this mismatch is because some factors may affect teachers’ written corrective feedback provision. The factors can correlate with time, place, topic and, goal. Students believe that direct feedback is effective. It helps them to reduce or anxiety in finding the suitable form. Pupils favor the unfocused feedback because it leaves “no questioning” or “hypothesizing” (Ellis, 2005, 2008).

On the other hand, teachers (according to the current findings of this study) prefer to provide indirect feedback as it challenges learners to self-correct their errors. Teachers believe that indirect feedback students to find the proper format. It motivates them to be responsible for their learning (Lalande, 1982; Ellis, 2008). Teachers favor focused feedback because it focuses only on the significant errors; teachers select specific errors; most important ones because it helps the learners to reflect on what they have written (Ellis, 2008). The mismatch in this study is because the provision of types of feedback on learners’ writing can be challenging for the teacher. Giving focused feedback is difficult; it takes time and energy for learners who can’t process all the corrected errors at once (Ellis, 2008). Giving direct feedback can also be demanding for teachers. It is necessary not always to spoon-feed learners and give them the proper corrections; it is crucial to let learners be responsible to self-correct their errors. Sheen (2007) argues that providing feedback types is relevant to learners’ proficiency level. It
can tell what learners prefer. Sheen (2007) added that indirect feedback is more suitable for learners with better analytic ability.

**Conclusion:**
This research explores learners’ and teachers’ preferences regarding written corrective feedback types. The research tools used were: the “Learner Questionnaire” and the “Teachers’ Questionnaire”. Findings indicated a mismatch between teachers’ and learners’ preferences regarding written feedback types. Teachers favor indirect feedback and focused feedback, whereas learners prefer direct input and unfocused feedback. Factors can interfere with teachers’ preferences.

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Investigating the Low English Proficiency of Saudi EFL Learners

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Abstract
Saudi students studying English as a foreign language often do poorly in their English courses, and despite a growing number of studies on this issue the root causes have remained a mystery. To gain a more comprehensive perspective, this study investigated the underlying reasons for Saudi EFL learners performing poorly in English by including all major stakeholders. This study attempts to find out the potential underlying reasons for the low performance of Saudi EFL learners. The researcher conducted qualitative interviews with two educational consultants, six university teachers, six graduate students, and six high school teachers. In addition, quantitative data came from high school students via a questionnaire addressed to 100 participants. The data revealed a shared chain of factors related to objectives, learners, teachers, curricula, assessment, and practicality. The findings suggested a gap between the theories consultants used to set class objectives and actual practice. This gap stemmed from consultants not consulting with or directly evaluating people in the field, such as educators, students, or university staff. The study recommends researchers get an overview of Saudi English learners at the macro level rather than focusing solely on their performance in one language skill. That should produce more valid, reliable, and practical suggestions to improve Saudi EFL learners’ performance.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, English language challenges
Introduction

Despite the efforts of individuals, learning institutions, and governments (Bashehab & Buddhapriya, 2013), students often have poor ability in their second language (L2). This is the case in Saudi Arabia, where the government has expended considerable time, money, and energy promoting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with less than remarkable results (Al-Khairy, 2013; Elyas & Picard, 2010). Numerous studies have shown that Saudi EFL learners routinely demonstrate below-average English skills (e.g., Al-Nasser, 2015; Alrabai, 2016; Alqahtani, 2019; Alshammari, 2021). Despite studying English for at least six years, they typically show poor reading performance in language proficiency exams, such as TOEFL, and are unlikely to have the competency needed at the university level (Alqahtani, 2019; Alshammari, 2021).

This study suggests that most treatments to improve Saudi learners’ English fail to address the core problem (cf. Khan, 2011; Rajab, 2013). After years of L2 instruction following a traditional teacher-centric model, Saudis see themselves as passive recipients of knowledge (Alqahtani, 2019; Alshammari, 2021). This pattern leads them to be inactive and silent in the classroom unless they are asked to recall information. Such a scenario runs in contrast to the zone of proximal development, which asserts that “direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless. A teacher who tries to do this usually accomplishes nothing but empty verbalism, a parrotlike repetition of words” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 150).

Alrabai (2016) proposed two main types of factors harming English performance: “internal/individual factors (the learner's demographic characteristics) and external factors (sociocultural variables, instructional variables, and problems with the educational system)” (p. 2). Given the number of studies that have offered potential solutions, why does this problem persist? Numerous studies have sought to uncover the reasons for the poor language performance of Saudi EFL learners (e.g., Al-Nasser, 2015; Alqahtani, 2019; Alrabai, 2016; Alshammari, 2021). However, to the researcher’s knowledge, none of them included policymakers or educational consultants in the Ministry of Education along with university and high school EFL teachers. This study sought to understand the underlying reasons why Saudi EFL learners perform poorly in English by gathering data from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, from educational consultants, who work closely with policymakers, to educators who implement the resulting policies and students. In addition, the study comments on the practicality, validity, and reliability of the underlying reasons suggested by other studies attempting to find out responses to the two research questions; 1) What are potential underlying reasons for the low performance of Saudi EFL learners? 2) What recommendations could improve their English performance?

Literature Review

Alrabai (2016) highlighted internal and external reasons for Saudis’ low English ability. The internal factors included: gender, age, motivation. That study claimed external factors had greater influence than demographic factors. External factors, which are not controllable by learners, could include sociocultural factors, such as the influence of Arabic as the first language (L1); religion, culture, and society; instructional variables […] the curriculum, and the teaching methods. Another issue was the large number of learners per class.

Alqahtani (2019) noted that Saudi EFL learners had an average overall TOEFL score of 64 out of 120 between January and December 2016. To investigate the reasons for such a low
Alshammari interviewed a random sample of 60 EFL learners and 30 teachers. The study proposed several contributing factors related to the students, teachers, learning environment, and curriculum.

Al-Nasser (2015) examined teaching methods and environment. Reasons for poor English included (a) not introducing English earlier, (b) poor teacher training, (c) outdated curriculum, (d) poor technology use in the classroom, (e) students using their L1 instead of the L2, and (f) students’ fear, anxiety, and lack of motivation. Al-Nasser recommended introducing English earlier, focusing on quality over quantity, paying more attention to evaluation than examination, limiting classes to under 20 students, and increasing the time allocated for English classes.

Many studies have examined Saudis’ poor EFL performance in a specific area, such as reading or speaking. For instance, Khan et al. (2020) investigated reading difficulties in elementary school. They collected qualitative data from 290 students and nine teachers and supervisors. Based on the interviews, reading test, and checklist, they concluded that students’ reading difficulty was caused by insufficient vocabulary, incorrect spelling, slow reading, inaccurate pronunciation, and poor grammar. They recommended learners focus on these areas to improve their reading, which could consequently improve their overall language ability.

Alharbi (2015) suggested that Saudi EFL students’ poor communication skills in English came from not using English outside the class and a lack of access to authentic language situations. Alharbi recommended (a) reevaluating Ministry of Education policies, (b) including higher-order skills and critical thinking, and (c) making some public schools bilingual.

Chatta and Haque (2020) attempted to improve writing skills of Saudi English learners through using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It substantially aimed at implementing Flipped Classroom instruction as a tool to improve the overall writing strategies through dividing the participants into control and experimental groups. It found out that the experimental group concluded with better writing performance than those in control group.

Altamimi and Ab Rashid (2019), also conceptualized the importance of English language learning in Saudi context, and they specifically explored Saudi English learners’ writing/ spelling challenges since writing is a key success in academic life. They tried to understand the underlying reasons that caused spelling errors of Saudi EFL learners. They concluded with more frequent reasons; 1) English syllabus, 2) learners’ attitude, 3) effect of first language. Also, Alshammari (2021) explored the pronunciation issues that Saudi EFL learners usually encounter during their English learning journey through highlighting the impact of dialect on mastering proper English onset clusters (two or three consonants in initial position). He concluded that Saudi learners who speak northern dialect receive the highest correctness rate due to their language contact with Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian and other Arabic variations.

**Methods**

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, collecting qualitative data via semi-structured interviews to collect in-depth details and quantitative data via one hundred questionnaires filled out by high school students. It was guided by two main research questions:
1. What are potential underlying reasons for the low performance of Saudi EFL learners?
2. What recommendations could improve their English performance?

It also explored a secondary question: To what extent are the suggested treatments practical, valid, and reliable?

**Participants**
The study recruited 126 participants, including two educational consultants, six university teachers, six MA students, six high school teachers, and one hundred EFL learners attending high school (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Distribution of participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Mean Age</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational consultants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school students</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedures**
Before conducting the study, the author received approval from the human subjects' committee. Sampling was based on certain inclusion criteria. For instance, the six faculty members had to be specialized in English language teaching, TESOL, or a related field, such as applied linguistics. After confirming that participants met the inclusion criteria, sent them the consent form, which explained the purpose of the study, confirmed the anonymity and confidentiality of the data, and stated that they would not be compensated. Participants that the interview could be online or face to face, depending on their preference. For the questionnaire, contacted some English departments at Saudi universities that offered an MA program in English teaching or a related field. With departmental cooperation, I reached out to MA students willing to participate.

**Results**

**Interview Results**
Q1: Do you think there is any problem with Saudi EFL learners’ level of English? To what degree out of 100% are you sure there is a problem?

All participants agreed that Saudi EFL learners’ English ability was a problem, with their certainty ranging from 50% among educational consultants to 90–100% among teachers and students (see Table two).

**Table 2. Question one’s results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Level of Certainty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Consultants</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Teachers</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA Students</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q2: What do you think is the exact problem that we need to focus on?
Educational consultants and university teachers emphasized the need to include higher-order cognitive skills in language classrooms and felt learners focused mainly on lower-order skills, such as memorization. MA students felt the problem came from the use of a traditional teacher-centered approach. School teachers asserted the opposite, that students put less effort into EFL classes, were less likely to see learning English as important, and did not want to use available resources to improve their English.

Q3: Can you explain what we mean exactly by sufficient language level for Saudi EFL learners?
This question received several different responses. Educational consultants asserted that sufficient language level should be identified by “the ability to pass authentic and valid language tests” based on international standards. University teachers also referred to standardized exams but noted that sufficient language level included the linguistic knowledge that could help learners perform better. The rest of the participants concentrated on learners’ ability to pass classroom tests with little-to-no reference to international standards.

Q4: Do you think learners are responsible for their low language performance?
The first set of educational consultants indicated learners were partially responsible for their poor English because they failed to use resources available online or study more. Consultants and university teachers agreed that students could ask more questions, study more at home, and use available resources and that most learners associated good language skills with high scores on class assessments. Most school teachers also gave a positive response. In contrast, MA students blamed teachers for interfering with the learning process and failing to motivate students to use English more inside and outside the classroom. One asserted that learners could improve their performance through teachers.

Q5: Do you think learners can improve their language performance by themselves?
Most educational consultants stated that this question should be rewritten (e.g., “To what degree do you think learners can improve their language level independently?”). They affirmed that learners could do this independently but to a limited degree. University teachers indicated that learners absolutely could improve on their own. MA students stated that learners needed intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, and self-confidence. School teachers also responded positively, pointing out that learners have more resources they can use independently if they have the motivation.

Q6: What do you think the most problematic issues are that affect learners’ low performance?
Educational consultants listed several major challenges. One noted there were internal and external factors related to students, teachers, and assessment methods. Another mentioned application validity inside language classrooms. He continued, “we are hypothetically and theoretically fine” but have some issues related to putting educational theories into practice. University teachers claimed learners needed to change their conceptualization of a good learner. One stated that most learners thought they could only learn English through a teacher-centered approach in a classroom and that learners should know they need to practice more outside of class. Another said, “They can speak to themselves in case. They cannot find a proper environment to practice English.” One stated the most problematic issue was “exposing L2 learners to English” and advocated including English in earlier grades. School teachers noted...
learners’ low motivation. One stated this came from the lack of English-related jobs. MA students indicated that problems often stemmed from teachers or traditional methods.

Q7: What ways do you recommend students could improve their language level? Educational consultants recommended learners use available sources and institutions giving teachers more comprehensive training. University teachers recommended learners do more research, called for more classroom observation to understand the problem, and stated that assessment methods needed to be reevaluated. School teachers said learners should put more effort into expanding their lexicon as most learners suffer from poor vocabulary, which is a lower level of Bloom’s taxonomy and thus required for higher-order linguistic skills. MA students recommended motivating learners inside and outside the classroom.

Q8: Do you think teachers are responsible for learners’ low language performance? Educational consultants gave similar responses that teachers were partially to blame along with other factors. University teachers said the teacher could play a major role in low performance, while MA students responded in more affirmative terms. In contrast, school teachers claimed that teachers played only a minimal role in learners’ low language competency as teachers had to follow inflexible lesson plans. For example, one said, “What can I do if I find out that some of my students lack English letters while they study in high school?” He continued, “If I waste the time of class teaching them basic letters/components, then I am not following the instructions received from the educational advisors.”

Q9: Do you think teachers can help improve students’ language performance? Educational consultants agreed that teachers could improve student performance, although teachers might lack the motivation or knowledge to do so. They claimed that successful English learning should include all important factors. University teachers indicated that teachers could provide learners with ample help by motivating them and teaching them how to work for themselves rather giving them all the answers. MA students said teachers could help by making their teaching less traditional and more interactive. School teachers stated that the help they could give was limited by “students’ willingness” to learn, which could be increased through internal and external factors.

Q10: What do you think are the most problematic issues in language teaching, if any? Educational consultants stated that language teachers should be more creative to attract and motivate students, but the opposite is often the case, where teacher motivation relies on student motivation. Furthermore, teachers should update their knowledge of language education. To this end, the Saudi government has decided to include mandatory exams for a teaching license, which tests knowledge related to the teacher’s field and targets teaching methods and issues. University teachers felt there was no single problem and instead proposed revising teaching methods and bridging the gap between theory and practice. They concluded that teachers should understand that not all successful methods are successful with all learners. MA students highlighted the importance of teachers’ lack of communicative English knowledge. According to school teachers, there should be a smaller student-teacher ratio to make it easier to give individual feedback and follow the progress of each learner.
Q11: What ways do you recommend teachers could improve their teaching methods? Educational consultants answered this question at the end of their response to the previous one (Question 10), i.e., that teachers should follow new developments in the field and be more creative about making learning more enjoyable and interesting. They also reiterated the importance of a license exam to force all teachers in the field to refresh their knowledge. University teachers noted the importance of teacher beliefs and the need to negotiate this issue for any changes to succeed. MA students mentioned that teachers should know more about interactive methods rather than only teacher-centered instruction. School teachers felt most teachers were fine but could improve by becoming more motivated.

Q12: Do you think English curricula are responsible for learners’ low language performance? Educational consultants said the curriculum was not responsible because the texts had been evaluated internationally and were continuously reevaluated by the Ministry of Education. Instead, they felt the root problem could be the inability to effectively teach them. University teachers were not sure because they had not looked at the new books yet. MA students gave a negative response, while school teachers said curricula were responsible to a degree, as the English knowledge in the books was far above learners’ level.

Q13: Do you think English curricula can be developed to improve learners’ language performance? Educational consultants answered in the affirmative but noted the assigned English materials were not fixed, as they were “following the new trends” in L2 learning research. University teachers also responded affirmatively but had not looked at the new books. MA students said the curricula could be improved but largely did not suggest how, except for one participant who recommended adding “more communication than exams.” School teachers reiterated that the number of topics and difficulty level were above learners’ level.

Q14: What do you think are the most problematic issues regarding English curricula, if any? Participants largely agreed there was no exact problem but recommend periodical evaluation of curricula to ensure they met learners’ level.

Q15: Do you think the assessment methods are responsible for learners’ low language performance? Educational consultants stated that assessment methods needed higher validity to measure the course objectives and other elements. University teachers had not looked at assessment methods but recommended learners receive more valid, authentic, and reliable assessment. MA students proposed take-home exams to reduce test anxiety, while school teachers did not feel assessment was responsible for poor language skills.

Q16: Do you think the assessment methods can be developed to improve learners’ language performance? All groups of participants responded positively about the problems of current classroom assessment. University teachers always hoped there was a way of improving assessment to decrease the negative washback effect from exams.
Q17: What do you think are the most problematic issues regarding the assessment methods, if any?

Educational consultants recommended assessing higher-order thinking skills rather than concentrating on memorization, such as by adopting something similar to the norm-references scores operated by TOEFL. University teachers felt it was important to measure language skills beyond the ability to store and extract knowledge. MA students said learners should be asked to be more active, such as by giving presentations, rather than focusing on texts. School teachers felt learners should have to take a placement test before joining a class as teachers were burdened with learners lacking fundamental linguistic knowledge.

**Questionnaire Results**

The questionnaire results are presented in Table three. Regarding the first questionnaire item, more than 90% of participants felt they needed to improve their English skills (see Figure one).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel that I need to improve my English skills</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My English level is okay</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I think learning English means learning English culture</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I feel bored of learning English</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The English teacher has good experience</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teachers usually talk and we listen</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I care about grades more than learning English</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I don’t want to learn English anymore</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The book is difficult to understand</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I usually revise my English lessons at home</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 1](chart.png)

**Figure 1. Distribution of responses to Item one**

Not surprisingly given the response to Item 1, around three quarters of participants disagreed with the second item that their English was sufficient (see Figure two).
For Item three, learners largely conflated learning the English language and Anglophone culture, thereby viewing language and culture as inseparable (see Figure three). 

The participants strongly agreed with Item four that they frequently felt bored of learning English. This boredom could reflect low motivation to learn the language (see Figure four).
Over half of participants agreed that teachers lacked experience, and around a third reported they did not know, with few selecting other options (see Figure five).

![Distribution of responses to Item five](image1)

**Figure 5. Distribution of responses to Item five**

Responses to Item six indicated the teachers followed a teacher-centered approach. Just over 90% of participants reported that teachers talked and students passively received the information (see Figure six).

![Distribution of responses to Item six](image2)

**Figure 6. Distribution of responses to Item six**

Learners responded positively to Item seven, confirming they cared about their grades more than English because grades determined whether they would pass exams (see Figure seven).

![Distribution of responses to Item seven](image3)

**Figure 7. Distribution of responses to Item seven**
Responses to Item eight indicated students mostly preferred not to continue learning English (see Figure eight).

![Figure 8. Distribution of responses to Item eight](image1.png)

For Item nine, participants thought English materials were difficult to understand and thus perhaps beyond their level (see Figure nine).

![Figure 9. Distribution of responses to Item nine](image2.png)

Item 10 concerned whether learners looked over and revised their English lessons outside class. They were more likely to disagree than agree, but their responses varied greatly, as shown in Figure 10.

![Figure 10. Distribution of responses to Item 10](image3.png)
Discussion
This study sought to answer three research questions: What are potential underlying reasons for the low performance of Saudi EFL learners? What recommendations could improve their English performance? To what extent are the suggested treatments practical, valid, and reliable?

The findings revealed several possible underlying reasons for why Saudi EFL learners perform poorly in English. A major issue was the gap between theory and practice. The Saudi government has spent considerable time, money, and effort hiring educational consultants to improve instruction. Although the resulting curricula, methods, and materials might be based on valid theory, they are not always effectively carried out in practice (Al-Nasser, 2015; Alqahtani, 2019; Alrabai, 2016; Alshammari, 2021). For the new learning objectives to be workable, they need to be communicated clearly at the micro and macro levels to English teachers, along with suggestions for the best ways to achieve these objectives.

The objectives could be made easier to achieve if policymakers took into account the varying characteristics of teachers, students, and local culture. For example, northern Saudi Arabia is more rural, and students there are often preoccupied with helping on their family farms, leading to more absences from class. Thus, it is vital to determine why students in a given area are not attending class regularly. With this information, it would be easier for policymakers to address student-related learning obstacles.

A growing body of research has investigated issues leading to low test scores, poor language ability, and concerns among students and faculty in the Saudi EFL classroom. However, prior accounts of this problem have failed to factor in the role of educational consultants in the Ministry of Education, where objectives are made, curricula designed, and guidelines produced. Despite the use of valid and reliable methodologies, these consultants may have failed to appreciate the target audience, i.e., Saudi students. Policymakers need more data on how these learners think and see their classes. They also need to look at other sociocultural and economic factors. Saudi students often view English more as a course to pass to obtain a degree and a better income. In contrast, EFL students in other Arab countries might also see the language as an additional tool they can use in their work. Therefore, Saudi students might be more motivated to learn English if they viewed the ability to use it as important to their career rather than merely for passing exams.

To address these issues, the Ministry of Education has had educational experts assess the validity, reliability, and practicality of implementing different methodologies and how well they actually achieve the desired objectives. Methods should be reevaluated to make students an active part of the learning process. In this way, students could be encouraged to move from the lowest stage in the cognitive process (memory) to higher stages, enabling them to think creatively and critically. This in turn could help them more confidently express themselves in the target language.

Conclusion
This study attempted to investigate all possible major reasons for the poor English of Saudi EFL students, starting with classroom practices. The data revealed a gap between the people setting objectives, designing curricula, and mandating policy on the one hand and the teachers and students on the other.
students who have to implement that policy on the other. The researcher interviewed decision-makers as well as teachers and students at the high school and university levels to collect a broad range of perspectives. The findings showed that each group had sometimes very different opinions about learning problems and how to solve them. Therefore, educational consultants should observe classes and ask teachers about their professional needs and teaching challenges. To facilitate this process, the Ministry of Education could create an online portal for teachers and students to submit their concerns. Such data could in turn inform the research of university professors. This collaboration would work more efficiently under a single project. Resolving this problem requires more comprehensive data and analysis that examines how different factors are related and contribute to learning issues. Only then can the validity, reliability, and practicality of the Ministry of Education’s objectives for English be assessed. Once that assessment is complete, the next step would be to select more effective methods by examining whether it meets learner needs. Finally, implementing these changes would requiring educating, training, and certifying teachers.

**About the author:**

Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari is an assistant professor in Applied Linguistics, English Department, Jouf University. His research interests include second language acquisition, second language assessment and others. [https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9049-4638](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9049-4638)

**References**


Appendices
Appendix A
Consent Form for University Teachers

Dear Professor / Faculty Member,
I am Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari, and I am investigating challenges that could cause Saudi EFL learners to have low English performance as part of the study “Investigating the Low Proficiency Level of Saudi EFL Learners: A Comprehensive Analysis to Understand What the Problem Is, from Where It Comes, and How It Could Be Solved.” I kindly ask for you to be part of this study as a participant. All personal information will be anonymous and confidential. No one will have access to it except the researcher for the purpose of coding only. For example, the researcher would report the responses as in “Participant 1, a male faculty member, responded to Question 9 by saying…” or “Participant 5, a female MA student, highlighted the importance of…” There is no reward for participating.

Basically, your job is to respond to several questions (maximum 25) regarding the study topic through a semi-structured interview that can be conducted face to face or online. If you are willing to participate, please send this form back to my e-mail ksa.usa.h@hotmail.com or h.alshammari@ju.edu.sa after circling the following information that best describes your current position/rank and signing below:

- I am a Faculty Member: (Assistant Professor) / (Associate Professor) / (Professor)

I am willing to participate in this study and am interested in this topic.

Please sign here:

…………………………..
Thank you for your cooperation.

The Researcher,
Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari
Appendix B
Consent Form for MA Students

Dear MA Student,
I am Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari, and I am investigating challenges that could cause Saudi EFL learners to have low English performance as part of the study “Investigating the Low Proficiency Level of Saudi EFL Learners: A Comprehensive Analysis to Understand What the Problem Is, from Where It Comes, and How It Could Be Solved.” I kindly ask for you to be part of this study as a participant. All personal information will be anonymous and confidential. No one will have access to it except the researcher for the purpose of coding only. For example, the researcher would report the responses as in “Participant 1, a male faculty member, responded to Question 9 by saying…” or “Participant 5, a female MA student, highlighted the importance of…” There is no reward for participating.

Basically, your job is to respond to several questions (maximum 25) regarding the study topic through a semi-structured interview that can be conducted face to face or online. If you are willing to participate, please send this form back to my e-mail ksa.usa.h@hotmail.com or h.alshammari@ju.edu.sa after circling the following information that best describes your current status and signing below:

- I am an MA student and my specialized area is (TESOL) / (TEFL) / (Applied Linguistics)

I am willing to participate in this study and am interested in this topic.

Please sign here:

………………………………..

Thank you for your cooperation.

The Researcher,
Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari

Appendix C
Consent Form for High School Teachers

Dear Teacher,
I am Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari, and I am investigating challenges that could cause Saudi EFL learners to have low English performance as part of the study “Investigating the Low Proficiency Level of Saudi EFL Learners: A Comprehensive Analysis to Understand What the Problem Is, from Where It Comes, and How It Could Be Solved.” I kindly ask for you to be part of this study as a participant. All personal information will be anonymous and confidential. No one will have access to it except the researcher for the purpose of coding only. For example, the researcher would report the responses as in “Participant 1, a male faculty member, responded to Question 9 by saying…” or “Participant 5, a female MA student, highlighted the importance of…” There is no reward for participating.

Basically, your job is to respond to several questions (maximum 25) regarding the study topic through a semi-structured interview that can be conducted face to face or online. If you are willing to participate, please send this form back to my e-mail ksa.usa.h@hotmail.com or h.alshammari@ju.edu.sa after circling the following information that best describes your current position/rank and signing below:

- I am an English teacher with experience of (1-3 years) / (4-8 years) / (more than 8 years)

I am willing to participate in this study and am interested in this topic.

Please sign here:

………………………………..
Thank you for your cooperation.

The Researcher,
Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari

Appendix D
Interview Items

a) Overall View

Q1: Do you think there is any problem with Saudi EFL learners’ level of English? To what degree out of 100% are you sure there is a problem?
Q2: What do you think is the exact problem that we need to focus on?
Q3: Can you explain what we mean exactly by sufficient language level for Saudi EFL learners?

b) Student-Related Issues

Q4: Do you think learners are responsible for their low language performance?
Q5: Do you think learners can improve their language performance by themselves?
Q6: What do you think the most problematic issues are that affect learners’ low performance?
Q7: What ways do you recommend students could improve their language level?

c) Teacher-Related Issues

Q8: Do you think teachers are responsible for learners’ low language performance?
Q9: Do you think teachers can help improve students’ language performance?
Q10: What do you think are the most problematic issues in language teaching, if any?
Q11: What ways do you recommend teachers could improve their teaching methods?

d) Curriculum-Related Issues

Q12: Do you think English curricula are responsible for learners’ low language performance?
Q13: Do you think English curricula can be developed to improve learners’ language performance?
Q14: What do you think are the most problematic issues regarding English curricula, if any?

e) Assessment-Related Issues

Q15: Do you think the assessment methods are responsible for learners’ low language performance?
Q16: Do you think the assessment methods can be developed to improve learners’ language performance?
Q17: What do you think are the most problematic issues regarding the assessment methods, if any?

Appendix E
High School Student Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel that I need to improve my English skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My English level is okay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I think learning English means learning English culture</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I feel bored of learning English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The English teacher has good experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I care about grades more than learning English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I don’t want to learn English anymore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The book is difficult to understand</td>
<td></td>
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<td>I usually revise my English lessons at home</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents' Perspectives towards Implementing English-Medium Instruction at Tertiary Education in Oman

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Abstract
This study investigates parents' perspectives towards using English as a medium of instruction (EMI). Hundred and seventeen (117) parents who had children studying at higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Sultanate of Oman answered a questionnaire featuring 40 items with a 5-point Likert-scale response key. Findings indicate that, while many parents displayed favorable attitudes towards implementing EMI in HEIs, approximately half of them asserted that their children's English is not good enough to cope with EMI. Therefore, most of them believed that some courses at least should follow Arabic medium instruction. The study explores the advantages and disadvantages of EMI, and findings reveal that the majority of the respondents identify more advantages. It was also found out that the respondents assisted their children in several ways to cope with EMI. For instance, by financing their children to learn English in private institutions, encouraging children to translate their course materials into the Arabic language, and seeking the support of parents' friends to explain doubts and what children have not understood in the classroom.

Keywords: children's education, English as a medium of instruction, parents' perspectives, tertiary education, Oman, Arabic

1. Introduction

English is considered a global language for science, business, technology, communication, and academia in many countries (Block & Cameron, 2002; Crystal, 2003). There is no denying the immense power status of English worldwide; Oman is no different, and English is an essential tool in modern Oman (Al Hajri, 2013; Al-Issa, 2015). English is considered the "key element in the development of the country and its effective integration into the modern world" (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012, p. 263). People in Oman use English to travel, pursue higher education, find a white-collar job, and communicate with other nations (Al-Issa, 2014; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). In the urban areas, English is moving from the status of a foreign language to that of a second language (Al-Ghatrifi, 2006; Khan, 2011).

Economically, Oman is almost dependent on oil, accounting for 80% of its income (Al Hajri, 2013). As a result, like the other Gulf States, Oman has attracted lucrative direct foreign investments from the west, especially from the USA and UK, to start their oil and gas businesses. These companies depend on the expatriate workforce, whose language of communication is English, to participate in Oman's modernization projects. All these factors influence the status of English. According to Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2016), the discovery of oil has involved "the importation of the foreign expertise, capital, technology, and labor necessary to exploit them effectively, and contributed to the continued importance of English language in the Gulf States" (p.395).

The ever-growing significance of English has forced the Omani government to reform its education system to merge with the globalized world. One of these reforms is implementing English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) at tertiary education to teach multiple disciplines, especially science and technology. According to Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova (2014), EMI has been implemented at (HEIs) in Oman since establishing the first Oman public university in 1986. Other HEIs replicated this in Oman, which has increased over the past three decades. These HEIs range from two-year colleges offering diplomas in various specializations to four-year colleges and universities offering Bachelor's degrees (Al-Lamki, 2006).

However, when students join HEIs, they start to learn in English instead of learning English. This marks a remarkable shift in their life as a student. In schools, Arabic is the medium of instruction (Al-Jardani, 2015). Thus, 88% of the students who join tertiary education start by taking intensive English programs that prepare them to study their specializations in English (Al Shmeli, 2011; AL Bakri, 2017). Successful completion of English courses is a prerequisite in their specialization programs at the HEIs. Thus, English plays a significant role in deciding Omani students' future in HEIs (Al Hajri, 2013; Al-Jardani, 2015).

Therefore there are a lot of research on using EMI at HEIs in Oman (AL Bakri, 2017; Al Jadid, 2009; Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova, 2014). Most of these studies scrutinize the issues related to EMI such as, the rationale behind implementing EMI (Collins, 2010), the impact of EMI on students' academic experience and language proficiency (AL Bakri, 2017), teaching methods used in EMI (Al Jadid, 2009) and challenges students face in EMI classes (Al Bakri, 2013). The participants of these studies are teachers, students, or both. However, Al Issa (2015) states “problems and solutions pertinent to teaching an international foreign language like
English should not and cannot be merely confined to and perceived through the teachers and students” (p. 583).

Therefore, securitizing various agents and agencies is a must to get a comprehensive understanding of a vital language policy like EMI. One of these agencies is parents, who have a significant role in shaping their children's educational experiences (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2016; Al-Barwani et al., 2012; Shoup, Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Simmons, 2008). Parents' perspectives in drafting education policies is however rarely addressed and taken into account in literature. Therefore, the current study aims to explore parents' perceptions about the implementation of EMI in HEIs in Oman.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Studies on EMI
2.1.1. Studies from the Arab Gulf

There is a volume of research published on students' perception of EMI in HEIs in the Gulf. For instance, Alazemi (2017) investigated 100 students' perceptions of using EMI at HEIs in Kuwait through questionnaires, classroom observation, and focus groups. He found that students in Kuwait preferred to learn in English medium since it is fundamental to find well-paid jobs and ease their path if they want to complete their postgraduates. Majority of the participants (86%) in Alazemi's study "agreed that proficiency in English brings many academic benefits" (p.140). However, he illustrated that Kuwaiti HEIs face many difficulties due to EMI policies, including comprehending lectures, answering exam questions, and writing assignments. Therefore, he found that students rely on translation, forming study groups, and sometimes taking private tuitions (Alazemi, 2017).

In the UAE, Belhiah and Elhami (2015) explored students' and teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of EMI to teach subject matter in six universities located in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Al Ain, Sharjah Ajman, and Ras Al Khaimah. Five hundred students and 100 teachers responded to questionnaires and structured interviews. They found that students viewed English as the language of academia and science, while they viewed Arabic as the language of the Quran. In addition, students perceived English language proficiency as vital to secure employment in the future. However, most participants in their study were struggling to learn their courses in English, so they expressed that they needed more Arabic in HEIs in the UAE to comprehend their lectures and get better grades. In the same vein, Troudi and Jendli (2011) investigated the impact of EMI on Emirati students' educational achievements and learning experience. The researchers administered a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire to 110 female students who studied different disciplines such as business, communication and media, education, and information technology at Zayed University. Following the analysis of the questionnaire data, 10 students participated in semi-structured interviews. They found that family background and parental attitudes towards English positively impact students' acceptance of EMI. They elaborated that students who had studied in private English-medium schools were more prepared to face the academic demands of EMI than their colleagues who learned English as a subject, among others in the curriculum of the government primary and secondary schools. In addition, they found that students associated English with the discourse of modernity, science, and academia while they associated Arabic with the discourse of identity,
religion, and heritage. They argued for the necessity of bilingual education in tertiary education in the UAE, a point shared by Belhiah and Elhami (2015) and Findlow (2006).

Similarly, in Qatar, Pessoa and Rajakumar (2011) investigated students' perceptions of EMI implementation at two universities through a survey, self-assessment of language abilities, focus groups, and interviews. They found that students viewed English as the language of business education and personal development. However, students admitted that EMI might affect their ability to use Arabic and their identity through exposure to western culture. However, the participants in this study expressed their preference for EMI.

In Saudi Arabia, Al-Jarf (2008) examined the students' attitudes towards EMI at the university level. She found that 96% of the students viewed English as a superior language since it is the language of science, research, technology, and the labor market. The study also revealed that 82% of the students considered Arabic as a language of religion, history, and heritage.

2.1.2 Studies from Oman
Regardless of the growing body of research about EMI, studies in Oman are still relatively scarce (Al Bakri, 2017). Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2016) investigated 60 science students' perceptions towards implementing EMI at a public university in Oman using a questionnaire. The study revealed that most participants believed that "English is the global language of science and technology" (p. 99), yet more than half preferred Arabic-medium instruction to study their specialization as students encountered many difficulties in reading and technical vocabulary related to their discipline. The students suggested using code-switching between English and Arabic during the lectures.

Another study by Al Bakri (2017) investigated students' perceptions of implementing EMI policy at a public HEI in Oman via distributing a questionnaire among 328 students studying in a public college in Oman, conducting 14 classroom observations, and interviewing 14 students. She found that students firmly believed that EMI should be used in Omani HEIs to enhance their English proficiency that is fundamental for Oman's job market. She also found that students did not support using Arabic as a medium of instruction at HEIs in Oman since it would "limit their job opportunities" (p. 194). Her study also revealed that students believed that their speaking skills flourished due to EMI. The study revealed that the students encountered some severe obstacles in reading. For instance, a lack of lexicon knowledge impedes comprehension skills. The study further highlighted EMI policy in HEIs negatively affects the quality of educational experience of Omani students. She also claimed that EMI hinders students' involvement in higher thinking endeavors such as expressing their argument, discussing issues, or asking questions. Furthermore, some of the participants in her study experienced frustration since they got delayed due to the EMI policy.

2.2 The role of parents in their children's education
The literature classifies parent involvement into main categories: participation at school and involvement at home (Al-Harrasi & Al-Mahrooqi, 2014). The former relates to "attending classes, having meetings with teachers, participating and volunteering in school-related activities, and making decisions with school policymakers" (p. 273). However, the latter includes parents helping their children to check their homework, doing assignments, and talking
about general issues related to their schools. International literature has shown that parents' involvement in their children's education is usually positive and encouraging (Ceka & Murati, 2016; Maluleke, 2014).

Parents’ active involvement in their children's education process brings in both positive and encouraging changes in students’ life. In the context of Oman, a relatively small body of literature is concerned with the parental role in children's education in general and in English language education in particular. Al-Harrasi and Al-Mahroooqi (2014) studied Omani parents' involvement in their children's schooling. They used a questionnaire distributed to 40 Omani parents (20 male and 20 female) from one city in Oman. They found that 96% of Omani parents believed their involvement positively impacted their children's academic performance. The study also found that 90% of parents believed their involvement included helping their children with their homework, and 87% discussed school issues with their children. In addition, 92% of the parents in this study believed that their involvement would positively impact their children's school behaviors. The study further revealed that parents did not get involved due to many reasons. For example, most Omani parents believe that teachers are more knowledgeable than them, and therefore teachers should make decisions regarding their children's academic performance. Some parents believed that their involvement in their children's school is not essential.

Al-Mahroooqi et al. (2016) conducted another study on the involvement of Omani parents in their children's education. They administered a questionnaire to 391 parents of students in the Omani public school system. They found that Omani parents are generally aware of the significance of their participation in their children's development. They also believed that their involvement would lead to better school behaviors and increase their motivation to study. They consider the importance of their active involvement in several home-based and school-based endeavors such as tutoring in Arabic reading, math, computer skills, Geography, or other subjects. However, they found that the parents’ actual level of involvement in their children's English language studies was not sufficient and that they were not likely to find a private English tutor for their children.

Al-Barwani et al. (2012) investigated 92 parents who have children in Omani HEIs about their perceptions of their role. They found that parents in Oman believed that their role in their children's higher education was vital. Indeed, they viewed “this role as a duty that needs to be fulfilled and thought it to be as crucial as the role of their children's higher education teachers” (p.13). They also reported that Omani parents' role exemplified through staying in contact with their teachers, following up on their academic progress, solving problems that their children encountered, and offering financial support.

As we can see, most studies conducted in Oman focused on parents' involvement in school education that has different expectations than HEIs. Hence, it may be problematic to apply findings from studies conducted on schools to HEIs. In addition, available literature focuses on Omani parents' involvement in their children's higher education in general. Research does not explicitly address parents' role in assisting their children in coping with EMI, which is considered one of the most important policies that affected Omani students' progress in their HEIs. Therefore, the current study is one step toward addressing the relative absence of topic-
based research on parents' perspectives on EMI at HEIs in Oman and how they assisted their children to cope with the educational policy.

Methodology

Research questions
This study primarily examines parents' perspectives towards EMI in HEIs in Oman. In doing so, the research attempts to address the following questions:
1. What are parents' attitudes towards implementing EMI at HEIs in Oman?
2. What are the challenges encountered by students due to EMI?
3. How do parents assist their children in coping with challenges caused by the implementation of EMI?
4. What are the advantages and drawbacks of implementing EMI at HEIs in Oman from parents' perceptions?

Data collection methods
The current study employed a three-part questionnaire in Arabic, which is the participants' native language. The first part sought participants' demographical details. The second part included forty items reflecting the main themes highlighted in the background of the study. This part of the questionnaire featured a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly agree to disagree strongly and a neutral option. Questions 1-11 investigate parents' attitudes towards implementing EMI at HEIs in Oman. Queries (12-20) aimed to discover challenges encountered by students due to EMI from parents' perspectives. In addition, the ways parents assisted their children to cope with these challenges were covered from questions 21 to 30. Questions 31 to 35 address the advantages of implementing EMI. Questions 36 to 40 aimed to investigate the drawbacks of EMI.

Participants
The participants in this study were 117 parents from different parts of Oman. Snowball sampling was used to select the sample. After the researchers identified potential participants, these parents were approached and asked to volunteer. Those parents who agreed to participate were later requested to identify others they thought would also be interested in participating. Subsequently, the second group of respondents was then approached and asked if they were interested, with the process continuing in this manner. The participants consisted of 64.7% females and 35.3% males. About half of the participants (49.6%) were between 35 and 45 years old, 24.8% were between 46 and 55 years old, and 22.2% were below 34 years old.

Regarding their educational background, 41.6% of the participants had their Bachelor’s degree, while 28.2% had their diploma, and 19.7% of the parents had their postgraduate studies. In addition, 41.3% of the participants had one child, 33.7% had two children, and 25% had more than three children studying at HEIs in Oman. Their English language proficiency was rated average, above average, and good. Percentage wise, it was 35%, 30% and 20% respectively.

Data analysis
Figure 1 highlights parents' attitudes towards implementing EMI at HEIs in Oman. An overwhelming majority, 85.5%, attributed a higher employability rate to English medium education. Focusing on the relevance of EMI at HEIs, 80.6% of the respondents claimed that
EMI at HEIs is relevant, and only 23.1% of respondents did not advocate similar sentiments. 74.4% of parents concurred that EMI should continue regardless of the potential low grades their children may obtain in their respective courses due to the lack of language competency. Meanwhile, 66.7% of the parents were well aware about the social prestige associated with EMI in higher education. They considered that English medium education places their children in high esteem in society. Another vital aspect of EMI in higher education from parents' perspective is the requirement of a higher level of language competency to be a successful learner. Most HEIs in the Sultanate of Oman conduct academic programs in Science and Technology streams. In line with this stream of disciplines, Most of the respondents, 64.9%, perceived attributes of the English language in the field of science and technology. They identified English as the language of science and technology. Overall, a striking percentage of parents project optimistic and ambitious perspectives towards implementing EMI at HEIs despite their children's lack of language competency level. In the meantime, a large majority of the respondents acknowledged the importance of EMI in the HEI's for higher employability rate. However, a considerable proportion of the respondents did not find the implementation of EMI desirable at HEIs.

Table 1 summarizes parents' perspectives on the challenges encountered by students due to the implementation of EMI at HEIs. The challenges focused in the questionnaire fall into three broad categories – challenges related to the lack of overall language competency, challenges caused by language apprehension, and challenges related to specific language skills. Insufficient competency level indeed causes poor understanding or some comprehension difficulties. Majority of respondents (70.7%) confirmed that their children's ability to read and understand course materials is not at a satisfactory level. Further, more than half of the respondents claimed that the children face difficulty understanding the course, course delivery, and understanding exam questions and answering them. The figures for these challenges stand as 61.5%, 56%, and 56.9%, respectively. Meanwhile Majority of parents associated low comprehension and
performance in examinations to lower competency in the language. Focusing on the second challenge, a clear majority, 57.7%, of parents stated that their child is afraid of making mistakes during class discussions. The requirement of specific language skills such as, technical vocabulary, writing, speaking, and presentation skills forms the third challenge. 56.1% viewed that their children find difficulties in understanding technical vocabulary, while only 46.7% attributed to the difficulty in English writing. However, parents marked a noticeable shift in perspectives concerning speaking. 56.5% of parents confided in their children's speaking skills, while only 31.3% perceived speaking skills as a potential challenge. Similarly, 45.7% of parents showed high esteem for their children's presentations skills, whereas only 38.8 regarded it as a challenge.

Over half of participants perceive a lower level of competency causes a lack of understanding of the course, course materials, and course delivery. Also, apprehension caused by fear of making mistakes was seen as another potential constraint in implementing EMI at HEIs. Simultaneously, parents identified challenges specific to some language skills like technical vocabulary and writing. However, a considerable majority of participants did not figure out speaking as challenging as other constraints identified in the survey.

Table 1. Challenges encountered by students due to EMI from parents' perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Contributory Factors</th>
<th>Percentage Agreed</th>
<th>Percentage Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor overall competency</td>
<td>• Poor understanding and comprehension difficulties</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Understand the course</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Understand course delivery</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Understand the questions and provide answer</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Language apprehension</td>
<td>• Fear of making mistakes in the class discussions</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Specific skills requirement</td>
<td>• Technical vocabulary</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing skills</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Speaking skills</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Presentation skills</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current study explores how parents assisted their children to cope with the challenges posed by EMI implementation at HEIs. Table three below details practical measures that parents initiated to support children to overcome challenges. According to the data, parents' assistance is threefold: direct, indirect, and zero assistance. Direct assistance could fall into two broad classifications. The first is parents as a source of motivation. Ninety and half (90.5%) of parents encouraged their children to translate difficult words into the first language, Arabic. This phenomenon is common among students in HEIs. Secondly, parents encouraged children to seek peer support for explanation and understanding. 80% of parents encouraged peer learning among their children. From a pedagogical perspective, peer learning is seen as a more productive approach and learning strategy. In addition, 71.3% of parents claimed they discuss EMI issues with their children at home, while only a marginal percentage (11.3%) did not discuss the issues at home with their children. Regarding the second category of parental assistance, parents contacted other stakeholders of their children's education, such as teachers, private educational institutes, and private tutors. The class teacher is a prominent stakeholder of
education. More than a half of parent (67%) inquired class teachers directly about their child's progress. In line with the parents' involvement with education stakeholders, 69.5% and 56.8% of parents had registered the child in a private institute and hired a private tutor respectively for extra support. Zero parental assistance in coping with the challenges related to EMI implementation at HEIs is due to some valid reasons. For example, 45.7% of parents contended that the child's maturity level does not require their assistance. However, exactly half of the parents (50%) deny this, and they opined that they should assist the child despite the satisfactory maturity level. In this vein, 38.2% of parents hold the college responsible for the availability of effective platforms or communication channels to inform parents about their children's progress. However, 34.8% refuted this claim. Interestingly, 41.7% of parents did not assist their children, as they did not feel qualified enough. However, the same percentage of parents disagreed with the statement. Findings revealed 53% of parents believe that their assistance is not necessary on the premise that teachers know more about their students. Nonetheless, 39.5% of respondents denied this.

In short, parents in this study assisted their children through direct assistance by encouraging their children to learn the language through translating English materials into first language (L1), encouraging peer learning, and engaging in direct discussions with their children about issues caused by EMI. Parent also extended their indirect support by contacting the teacher to inquire about the child's progress and registering their child at a private institution, or hiring a private tutor for extra help. Based on the findings, parents' assistance could depend on parents' perception about child's maturity, parents' qualifications, and effectiveness of college communication methods about their child's progress. Meanwhile, a considerable majority claimed that they did not need to assist their children, as teachers know better about their children.

Table 2. How parents help their children to cope with these challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Assistance</th>
<th>Details of the Assistance</th>
<th>Percentage Agreed</th>
<th>Percentage Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Assistance</td>
<td>• Encourage translation into Arabic</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage peer support</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss issues with the children</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Assistance</td>
<td>• Inquire the class teacher about the child's progress</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enroll the child at a private educational institute for extra</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hire a private tutor</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero Assistance</td>
<td>• Maturity level of the child</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• College's facilities to inform about the child's progress</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of qualifications</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Responsibility of teachers</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 illustrates parents' perspectives on the advantages of implementing EMI at HEIs. There are four advantages: social empowerment, higher studies, job prospectus, and language proficiency. A staggering majority of parents acknowledged the above advantages that EMI could bring to their children. Majority viewed higher studies (93%), job prospectus (87.9) as the key benefits of EMI. Meanwhile, (85%) identified language proficiency as another critical benefit of EMI at HEIs. At the same time, only a negligible percentage (7.1%) viewed
otherwise. However, regarding the social empowerment embedded in the language, 68.5% of parents acknowledged social mobility attributable to proficiency in the English language. In comparison, 19.55% did not believe in the social empowerment associated with the EMI.

Figure 2. Advantages of implementing EMI at HEIs in Oman from parents' perspective
The questionnaire next focused on the potential disadvantages of implementing EMI at HEIs. The questionnaire inquired into four disadvantages. For instance, the influence of EMI on the L1 (Arabic), time consumption, identity, and low proficiency and the impact on students’ grades included as the potential drawbacks of the implementation of EMI. Over a half of parents (51.8%) viewed that EMI would cause lower proficiency and grades, while only 26.1% believed otherwise. Nearly half of the participants, 46.9%, viewed that students will have to spend more time adapting to EMI. Meanwhile, 44.6% of parents denied that EMI has a negative influence on L1. Only 31.3% opined that EMI negatively affects their L1. As of identity, 27.4% believed that EMI affects students' identity as Arab students.

All in all, time consumption and lower proficiency are the most concerning potential disadvantages of EMI application. However, implementing proper strategies to overcome the challenges identified in the research and different pedagogical approaches, such as promoting independent learning could effectively address these disadvantages.

Figure 3. The drawbacks of implementing EMI at higher education institutions in Oman from parents' perceptions
Discussion
This study examined parents' perspectives towards using EMI in HEIs in the sultanate of Oman. An overwhelming majority of parents displayed favorable attitudes towards implementing EMI in HEIs in Oman since it is the language of science and technology, their children must study their college courses in English. Moreover, most-parents in this study were pleased that their children studied their academic programmes in English and believed that it is appropriate to implement EMI at HEIs in Oman for some attributes of the language. First, Omani society recognizes the crucial role of English in "academic prosperity, future careers, and personal gains" (Alazemi, 2017, p.229).

Moreover, mastering English is one of the criteria for getting a white color job in Oman; parents realize that learning through English will open ample opportunities for their children's employment. In other words, Omani parents "acknowledged the international status of the English language and its important role in global communication, development, and employment" (Al Bakri, 2013, p. 61). However, approximately half of the parents asserted that their children's English is insufficient to cope with EMI.

Therefore, there is a demand to overcome students' struggles at HEIs in Oman by modifying EMI policy and adopting bilingual education since parents in this study prefer it. 82% of them believed that at least some programmes should be conducted in Arabic at HEIs in Oman, and students in other studies too shared similar views (Ismail, 2011; Al Bakri, 2013; Alazemi, 2017). Unfortunately, bilingual education is " rarely if ever on the agenda and discussed in the Arab World "(Ismail, 2011, p.242).

Regarding parents' opinions about some of the challenges encountered by their children due to EMI policy, the findings reveal that over half of participants believe that their children have a lower level of English proficiency that could lead to a lack of understanding of their course materials and negatively affects their academic performance. Also, apprehension caused by fear of making mistakes is seen as another potential constraint in implementing EMI at HEIs. At the same time, parents identify challenges specific to some language skills like technical vocabulary and writing. In recent years, the Omani government and educationalists have expressed serious concerns about the low English proficiency among students at HEIs. Researchers have expressed many reasons for this, including teacher-centered instruction, teachers' use of traditional methods, students' lack of motivation, and students' reliance on memorization (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al Issa, 2015; AL-Jadidi, 2009; Ismail, 2011).

Regarding how parents helped their children cope with EMI, the parents in this study asserted they assisted their children through direct assistance by encouraging them to learn the language and translating English materials into L1. Al Bakri's findings (2013) in a similar vein revealed that students depend totally on digitally translating the reading materials due to a lack of understanding texts in English.

Parent also extended their indirect support by contacting the teacher to inquire about the child's progress and registering their child at a private institution, or hiring a private tutor for extra help. According to Al-Issa (2010), parents in Oman who can afford the fees of private institutions and private tutoring do not hesitate to enroll their students to help their children cope
with the demands of English. However, these fees are considered high and can reach $25 per hour (Al-Issa, 2010, p.184). In addition, the results show that parents believe that HEIs lacked such programs that kept parents informed about their children's progress.

The study shows that almost half of the parents believed that teachers know better than the parents; thus, they did not get involved in their children's studies. Al-Harrasi and Al-Mahrooqi (2014) also viewed that "most Omani parents seem to be affected by the cultural notion that teachers are knowledge authorities" (p.282)

When talking about the advantages of implementing EMI at HEIs, the majority of the participants believed that one benefit of EMI is finding a job. Al-Mahrooqi (2012) also revealed that students' knowledge of English offers advantages in seeking good jobs. In Oman, most private and public sectors will not offer candidates the job if they have low English proficiency despite their competencies in their subjects. Another advantage of EMI from parents' perspectives is that EMI helped students improve their English proficiency. A common belief in the Gulf is that students can improve their English language skills while studying in their degree programs via EMI (Ismail, 2011; Al Bakri, 2013; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014; Alazemi, 2017). Another key advantage of EMI from parents' perspectives is that children look more prestigious if they learn their courses in English. Abdel-Jawad and Abu Radwan (2011) claimed "English has been perceived as a symbol of prestige and an assertion of a superior social status" (p.130). In the same vein, Al Bakri (2013) found that students in her study believed that learning via EMI makes students sound prestigious and well-educated. This phenomenon is not only in Oman but also in other Gulf countries (Alazemi, 2017; Habbash and Troudi, 2015; Al-Jarf, 2008), Turkey (Nurlu, 2015), and Korea (Kim, 2011). Indeed, English has become the means to maintain power and social status in different parts of the world. According to Pennycook (2001), English has "become one of the most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment or social positions" (p. 81).

Even though parents have expressed positive sides of implementing EMI, some parents are concerned about potential drawbacks. For instance, half of the parents believed that their students get low grades due to the EMI policy at HEIs. Also, almost half of the parents agreed that their children would get a higher grade if they studied in Arabic and students do not fully understand their lectures in English, which would negatively affect their academic progression and grade. This finding is consistent with literature from Oman (Al Bakri, 2017; Isamil, 2011), Kuwait (Alazemi, 2017); UAE ( Troudi & Juhindani, 2011), Saudi Arabia (Habbash and Troudi, 2015), Turkey (Nurlu, 2015) and Korea (Kim, 2011). Another frequent drawback of EMI is the ability of students to use Arabic. This corresponds to Al-Qhatani’s study (2016), which found that although Saudi parents preferred EMI, they feared that EMI has negatively impacted their children's ability to use Arabic. Regarding the effects on their children's identity, the majority of the parents thought that their children's identity would not be affected by using EMI.

Recommendations
The current study revealed that most parents perceive the importance of English as the language of sciences, technology, and employment. However, most parents prefer Arabic as the medium of instruction to teach at least some courses at HEIs, and Student participants share similar perspectives in other studies (Al Bakri, 2013; Ismail, 2011; Alazemi, 2017). Therefore, this study
recommends that bilingual education where HEIs afford their programs both in Arabic and English. Such a program could "enriched, sustained forms of instruction that allow [students] to receive support in their first language while learning a second language" (Thomas & Collier, 2003, p. 64). Implementation of bilingual education could be challenging, as it requires many amendments to the current EMI policy, including the syllabus, teachers, and assessments, among others. The Omani government has been heavily funding the education sector for almost three decades to raise students' proficiency in English via purchasing textbooks and equipment, bringing consultants, hiring teachers, and helping English language conferences and symposiums, yet the outcomes remain below expectations.

Therefore, based on parents' and students' perceptions of EMI, effective strategies should be investigated and implemented to streamline EMI at HEI's. This initiative will help overcome obstacles that both students and parents encounter under EMI to a greater extent. Also, further research on EMI in the Gulf region and other contexts, where English is taught as a foreign language, can be carried out to figure out the gaps and opportunities of EMI in the Omani context. One can also look into the feasibility of introducing EMI in secondary education, which would be easier to implement the studies in the HEIs. The research findings reveal that a significant proportion of the respondents receive EMI in favorable terms. Parents' positive attitude towards EMI could be utilised effectively to increase parents' involvement in promoting EMI at HEI's.

This study also recommends that HEIs should make ensure that they are equipped with programs that encourage parents to contact their children's progress. With the development in technology, HEIs can easily benefit from Web 2.0 tools such as Edmodo to keep parents informed about their children's performance and get more involved in their education. Such involvement can have a powerful impact on student's academic progress in HEIs. In addition, consistent examination of the parents' satisfaction with these programs and their participation in the HEIs can be helpful to look for ways to develop it and maximize their involvement.

The study found that almost half of the parents believed that teachers know better than the parents. Therefore, Al-Harrasi and Al-Mahrooqi (2014), recommend that the HEIs in the Sultanate of Oman should work hard to "reform the image of the teacher in parents' minds and let them understand that the role of the teacher has changed nowadays with the existence of technology" (p.283). In other words, parents should realize that teachers are no longer the only resource of knowledge, and parents could cooperate with teachers to achieve the purpose of the HEIs. According to Maluleke (2014), parents’ awareness on the teacher’s role and the role played by modern technology in language education can be enhanced through conducting regular meetings with parents or sending letters, text messages to them to find out ways to optimize and flourish students' learning experience in HEIs. Further research to explore views of parents, administrators, and policymakers on implementing bilingual education in HEIs in the sultanate and the steps required for this pragmatic shift. More research on perceptions of different education stakeholders on effective mechanisms and strategies to overcome the issues encountered in EMI is required. Research in this area could potentially enhance the quality of EMI at HEI's and minimize the potential obstacles that EMI could create. The current research sample consists of 117 parents. However, involving more parents representing all the HEIs in
Oman would demonstrate a more solid and broader perspective on the implementation of EMI at HEIs in Oman.

Conclusion
The study explored parents’ perspective towards using EMI in an Omani university through the administration of a 40-item questionnaire among 117 parents who had children studying at HEIs. The findings revealed that the majority of participants demonstrated positive attitudes towards implementing EMI in HEIs in Oman. Yet, about half of the parents admitted that their children's English is insufficient to cope with EMI policies implemented in HEIs. Therefore, most of the parents in this study preferred to have some courses taught in Arabic. The findings also revealed that parents helped their children by sending them to private institutions to improve their English, advising them to translate their learning materials into Arabic, encouraging them to seek peer support. Although this is a small-scale study, it contributes to the literature that examines parents' perspectives on the implementation of EMI at HEIs. However, further research is needed to deeply investigate parents' perceptions of EMI by implementing qualitative research. In addition, more research is ideal to study students' perspectives on their parents' involvement and its effects on their academic achievement. Further research can focus on elements of successful involvement of parents in their children's higher education.

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Use of Discourse Markers among Senior University Students

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Abstract
The study of discourse markers has attracted the attention of researchers as a facet of linguistics since the 19th century. The focus of research has been based on the theoretical status of discourse markers in relation to how they are used and for what reasons, explored in different contexts and settings; however, few studies have been conducted in the context of Saudi Arabia. This study, therefore, attempted to look at the use of discourse markers by senior university students majoring in English in Saudi Arabia and its functions. Fraser’s (2004) semantic perspective, classifying discourse markers into four categories, was adopted, together with Hiiiker’s (1991) features of discourse markers, consistent with the view that the meaning of discourse markers is related to their function of clarifying the intrinsic value of an utterance. The results revealed that students in their essays employed discourse markers in all four of Fraser’s (2004) categories. However, it was evident that the participating students struggled with the appropriate use of discourse markers. This issue should be examined in greater depth and the reasons for this difficulty assessed. One reason lies in students’ low exposure to discourse markers in class. It is thus highly recommended that teachers raise EFL students’ awareness of discourse markers by providing them with more related tasks and exercises.

Keywords: combining discourse markers, discourse markers, EFL learners, university students, written discourse

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Introduction

The study of Discourse Markers (DMs hereafter) has attracted the attention of researchers as an aspect of linguistics since 1977 (Fraser, 1999) due to their importance in contributing to cohesion and coherence in spoken and written discourse. According to Fraser (1999), DMs have been ascribed to different meanings among researchers, resulting in different definitions. Schiffrin (1987), for instance, states that DMs are dependent fundamentals that support elements of talk. In the same token, Redeker (1991) considers DMs to have an important function to attract the listener's attention to a particular connection of the utterance with prior discourse context. In essence, DMs are employed to connect discourse segments.

Historically, the focus of researchers has been on the theoretical status of DMs with how they are used and for what reasons. For instance, Schiffrin (1987) suggested that each DM has its own meaning, while Redeker (1991) argued that the meaning of a DM is dependent on its function of clarifying the intrinsic value of an utterance. Such differences of opinion lead to another issue regarding the benefits of having different definitions of DMs. The status of DMs has been explored in different contexts and settings, but very few studies have yet been conducted in the context of Saudi Arabia. This study, therefore, aims to look at how DMs are employed by senior university students majoring in English in Saudi Arabia. This study could highlight a significant explanation with regard to the awareness of Saudi senior university students towards their use of DMs and their functions.

This study sought to answer two research questions. The first question concerned which DMs were used by Saudi senior university students majoring in English. The second question explored the functions underpinning the use of DMs in students’ writing. We considered that by answering these two questions, it would be possible to achieve a holistic understanding of the reasons for the use of certain DMs.

Literature Review

Fraser (1999) defines DMs as “a pragmatic class, lexical expressions drawn from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases” (p. 950). Various terms and expressions are used for DMs, such as “discourse markers, discourse connectives, discourse operators or cue phrases” (Fraser, 1999, p. 932). This diversity indicates the range of views among researchers regarding the status of DMs and their application in speech and writing as devices that can help achieve cohesion and coherence (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), for example, by connecting sentences. The gradual shift from sentence-based grammar to discourse-based grammar as part of communicative language teaching and learning has attracted increasing attention to DMs from researchers (Fareh, Jarad, & Yagi, 2020). DMs can be used multiple times in a sentence and, while mostly employed at the beginning of the sentence, they can also be used in the middle and at the end of sentences. According to Hiilker (1991), DMs have four characteristics, namely that they:

- Do not affect the truth conditions of an utterance; do not add anything to the propositional content of an utterance; are related to the speech situation and not to the situation talked about; and have an emotive, expressive function rather than a referential, denotative, or cognitive function. (pp. 78-79).
As pointed out by Collins (1998), coherence and cohesion are important elements of high-quality essays and thus students are frequently taught how to make their writing coherent and cohesive. This has been found, for example, in some studies examining the role of cohesion in comprehending a text (McNamara, Louwerse, McCarthy, & Graesser, 2010). However, there is no evidence that the quality of writing is related to coherence cues among either first language or second language speakers (Crossley & McNamara, 2010). Thus, while coherence remains an important feature of writing quality, it is not evident that it is achieved through the use of cohesive devices (Crossley & McNamara, 2010).

Historically, the primary goal for language teaching was to improve students’ linguistic competence, especially for EFL learners. Communicative competence was a secondary consideration, being supposed to eventually develop later. However, linguistic, discoursal, and communicative competence should all be viewed as important. They ought to be taught at the same level and at an appropriate pace. For instance, Fareh (2014) stated that:

EFL teachers do not often accord adequate attention to developing learners’ discourse and pragmatic abilities in writing. Instead, they focus on correct language structures, spelling and punctuation. This tendency might be ascribed to the fact that EFL teachers find it easier to focus on teaching at the micro-linguistic level, i.e., the mechanics of writing, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure, rather than teaching at the discourse and pragmatic levels. (p. 924)

Indeed, students should have the opportunity to be exposed to DMs constructively under the supervision of experienced instructors. Thus, students’ overall competence would be improved, especially in terms of reading comprehension (Faghih-Sabet, Khodabandehlou & Jahandar, 2013). Competence should not be confined to the students’ ability to produce grammatically correct sentences, although the ability to produce appropriate comprehensible and cohesive sentences in a logical sequence should not be ignored (Fareh et al., 2020).

**Discourse Markers in Writing**

Writing in English is a productive tool aimed at delivering information to others in a timely manner, but is considered challenging for everyone, including native speakers. For second/foreign language learners, writing is even more complicated. Writers need to ensure their writing is coherent and clear to readers. Writers should therefore have the adequate vocabulary and the ability to use suitable words and phrases in their proper positions. It is especially difficult to achieve coherence and cohesion without a high level of proficiency in the language.

According to Sun (2013), the use of DMs in academic writing boosts comprehension, especially in the introductory and concluding sections. Indeed, employing DMs in writing can provide readers with the tools needed to follow the writer’s ideas in a systematic sequence. Although DMs are not an essential part of writing and are not attached to grammatical accuracy, their absence makes writing appear less natural (Brinton, 1996). Moreover, they are very helpful in the construction of functions and meanings (Schiffrin, 1987). It has been found that the use of DMs in writing by ESL/EFL learners can boost communication between writers and readers and improve the interpretation of the written text (Wei Sun, 2013). These are crucial benefits for ESL/EFL learners to attain in their written works.
**Combinations of Discourse Markers**

Studies of DMs have mostly concentrated on the use of markers individually (e.g., “however”, “furthermore”, “so”). In contrast, very few studies have focused on combinations of DMs. Fraser (2015), though, conducted a study to explore combinations of contrastive DMs (e.g., “but”, “on the other hand”) and implicative (I)DMs (e.g., “so”, “as a result”). He found no clear reason for such combinations occurring, but suggested that there are some factors such as genre, social dialect and style that would be worthy of further exploration. The marker “but” is considered the primary marker of contrastive (C)DMs. Commenting on the potential combination of CDMs using the example “we ought to leave. On the other hand, however, there’s good reason to remain (however)”, Fraser (2015) stated that “when but, however, or yet occur in a CDM combination, it signals the relationship of the second CDM” (p. 3). Table one shows Fraser’s denotation of acceptable combinations of CDMs.

**Table 1. Combinations of contrastive discourse markers (CDMs)**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>But</th>
<th>However</th>
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<th>Still</th>
<th>Nevertheless</th>
<th>OTOH</th>
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<th>OTC/TTC</th>
<th>In contrast</th>
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**Note 1.** Adopted from Fraser, (2015, p. 3)

Notes: OTOH = on the other hand; OTC = on the contrary; TTC = to the contrary.

In the same vein, combinations of IDM can be expected, but not to the same extent as CDMs. “So” is considered to be the primary marker among IDM. Fraser (2015) argued that “the Primary IDM, so, signals that S1 should be used by the hearer to justify the content of S2, leaving aside any specific reasons” and that “the Secondary IDM contribute a further refinement
to the relationship between S1 and S2” (p. 4). Table two presents Fraser’s acceptable combinations of IDMs.

Table 2. Potential combinations of implicative discourse markers (IDMs)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>So</th>
<th>Therefore/thus/hence/consequently</th>
<th>Then/given that</th>
<th>As a result/as a consequence/for that reason</th>
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</table>

Note 2. Adopted from Fraser (2015, p. 4)

**Previous Research**

Several studies have explored the use of DMs among English language learners. However, very few have focused on this issue in the context of Saudi Arabia, leading to the need to conduct a study in an attempt to understand this phenomenon among Saudi EFL learners. Some previous studies have focused on the use of DMs among Arab EFL learners, including those of Al-Khuweileh and Al-Shoumali (2000), Al-Jamhoor (2001), Al-Hazmi (2006), Ezza (2010), Umair (2011), Ali and Mahadin (2016), and Iseni, Almasaeid, and Bani Younes (2016). Most of these studies concur that Arab EFL learners experience difficulties in terms of their writing, including the misuse, overuse, or underuse of DMs. Some Arab EFL learners do not employ DMs sufficiently in their written work as they misunderstand the functions. Other studies have found that the frequency of use of DMs among EFL Arab learners is based on their proficiency level. More proficient students tend to use more DMs than less proficient students (Ali & Mahadin, 2016). Other studies have focused on the benefit of teaching DMs explicitly. For instance, Faghih-Sabet et al. (2013) conducted a study on the value of teaching DMs to students in their usual classes. They found that students’ reading comprehension improved. This is clear evidence that discourse competence can be achieved via an explicit teaching strategy.

This study sought to answer two research questions. The first question concerned which DMs were used by Saudi senior university students majoring in English. The second question explored the functions underpinning the use of DMs in students’ writing. We considered that by answering these two questions, it would be possible to achieve a holistic understanding of the reasons for the use of certain DMs.

**Methods**

Theoretically speaking, the study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the use of DMs among Saudi senior university students majoring in English. It stands on the assumption of interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm is adopted due to its natural stance where realities are elicited from the participants’ opinions and thoughts. Thus, the content of participants’ written essays was under consideration.
Participants

In total, 46 students (21 males and 25 females) participated and were asked to write an essay (1000 words) about the relationship between discourse and pragmatics as part of their usual class. This study adopted Fraser’s (2004) semantic perspective, classifying DMs into four categories: contrastive markers (CDMs), elaborative markers (EDMs), implicative markers (IDMs), and temporal markers (TDMs).

Tools and Procedures

As mentioned before, this study sought to address two research questions. The first question concerned which DMs were used by Saudi senior university students majoring in English. The second question explored the functions underpinning the use of DMs in students’ writing. To do so, a selected number of essays were analyzed based on Hiiiker’s (1991) four features of DMs. It began by highlighting the DMs used in the students’ writing and the frequency of each. The essays differed in pattern and style of DM use, including cause and effect, comparison and contrast, definition, and argument. Having identified the different patterns related to the DMs used, the functions and reasons for their use were linked to each DM. To achieve reliability and validity, respondent validation was followed in which participants were asked to verify their writings (Bryman, 2012).

Results

Based on Fraser’s (2004) semantic perspective in classifying DMs, it was found that all four categories were employed by students in their essays. However, it was quite clear that EDMs were predominant, comprising 66% of all DMs used in the students’ essays. The second most frequent category was contrastive markers at 16.4%, the third category was temporal markers taking up 15%, and the category least used was IDMs at only 3% (see Figure one).

![Figure 1. Functions of DMs used](image)

In further detail, the prevalence of EDMs in the students’ essays was largely due to use of “and” (see Figure 2). Indeed, excluding this marker, CDMs become the DMs most frequently used. There has been some argument regarding the status of certain DMs, including “and”, in terms of whether or not they should be called DMs (Schiffrin, 1987) or discourse connectives (Blakemore, 1987) based on the claim that discourse connectives share some of the
characteristics with DMs but not all of them. However, here it can be argued that discourse connectives should be considered to be the same as DMs as they have similar functions in the discourse. In addition, it is to be expected that EDMs will be used heavily in written academic texts as writers have the greatest need for the elaborative function. Indeed, EDMs have also been found to be the most dominant category in some related studies (Ab Manan & Raslee, 2016; Alahmed, Mohammed, & Kirmizi, 2020). It seems a stretch to say that academic writers primarily need elaborative markers when all they seem to use is “and”. It should be noted that the participating students barely used any other EDMs, which might strongly indicate that “and” was being used as a connective. For example, one of the students mentioned “and” four times in order to make one long sentence:

This essay will talk **and** discuss about the relationship between pragmatics **and** discourse analysis with more clarification **and** the first paragraph it’s gonna to be about pragmatics, **and** the second paragraph it’s gonna to be about discourse analysis.

This example clearly indicates the connective function of “and”, with students relying heavily on it to prolong their sentences. Thus, it seems that they are not fully aware of the real function of EDMs.

The second most frequent category in this study was CDMs and the most frequent individual marker was “or” (see Figure two). In contrast, the marker “but”, which is considered one of the most frequently used CDMs (Fraser, 2013), was not employed heavily in the students’ essays, although it did come second. According to Cuenca (2003), “or” is considered “a general marker associated with reformulation” (p. 1075). CDMs could be expected to be the second most frequent category in the students’ essays because it is argued that “contrastive relations between adjacent or more distant segments of discourse play an important role in expressing coherence relations in academic discourse including discourse written by university students of English” (Povolná, 2012, p. 131). Therefore, ESL/EFL learners are expected to employ CDMs in their written texts. For instance, one of the participating students wrote a single long sentence using “or” twice:

…language is used to get things **or** perform actions, and of how words can express things that are different from what they mean and discourse analysis is linguistics, a method of analyze texts **or** utterances longer than one sentence.

The example above suggests that the student was using “or” to provide choices and options with similar meanings in the first DM, but different options in the second. This could be related to the student’s level of awareness, which differed among the participating students.

TDMs were third in terms of the frequency of DMs used by the students in their essays. Similar to another study (Povolná, 2012), “as” was most frequently employed. It is argued that “speakers and writers exploit devices like temporal expressions to highlight theme shifts in discourse” (Bestgen & Vonk, 1995, p. 385). TDMs are very helpful in achieving coherence and cohesion. Their functions are based on “time, place, character and theme” (Bestgen & Vonk, 2000).
The category of DMs least employed in the participants’ essays was IDMs. The most frequent marker used in this category was “so”. Sometimes, this individual marker is seen “as indexing inferential or causal connections”, mostly focused on “marking inferential or causal connections between clauses” (Bolden, 2009, p. 974). Despite the frequent use of “so” among ESL/EFL learners, it has not been the subject of holistic systematic investigation, being viewed in the literature as either a referential or resultative marker (Buysse, 2012).

**Discourse Markers most frequently used**

Examining Figure two, it is apparent that among the four categories of DM functions, few DMs were frequently employed. These were the markers “and”, “as” and “or”. It is worth noting that due to the students’ low proficiency in English, they might tend to misuse or overuse some DMs. Whether or not these markers are called discourse markers or discourse connectives, their heavy usage among the participants in their essays is notable. In this regard, Fraser (1999) argues the following:

Whether they are called discourse markers, discourse connectives, discourse operators, or cue phrases (I shall use the term “discourse marker”), the expressions under discussion share one common property: they impose a relationship between some aspect of the discourse segment they are a part of, call it S2, and some aspect of a prior discourse segment, call it S1. In other words, they function like a two-place relation, one argument lying in the segment they introduce, the other lying in the prior discourse. (p. 938)

Based on my experience as a lecturer in a Saudi university, Saudi students tend to use long sentences in their writing as their way of imitating the scientific papers they come across. Indeed, scientific papers tend to avoid short sentences due to the belief they decrease readability (Deveci, 2019). Moreover, the use of long sentences is seen as boosting the authors’ positions in their writing and providing an authoritative tone (Deveci, 2019). Therefore, the use of “and” among the participants was an attempt to lengthen their sentences, but this could be hindered by their limited proficiency in English. For example, one of the students wrote the following:

Due to the nature of the organization of text and context, and thus the implied intentions of the text's initiator, pragmatics refers to specific frames of reality and context, and specific meanings being assigned to the interpretation of a context and its reality by the choice of word, sign, or symbol.

The student used the marker “and” five times in one long sentence in an attempt to extend it as far as possible. The choice of this marker was due to his limited linguistic repertoire and provides a good example of the overuse of a DM by the participants.
Figure 2. Frequency of use of DMs

The marker “as” was another of the DMs most frequently used by the students in their essays, aiming to give examples and provide additional clarification. For instance, one of the participants wrote the following sentence:

I mean pragmatics as the study of how the meaning of spoken and written discourse is related to the context in which that speech and writing occurs.

This example illustrates the student’s attempt to provide an explanation of the meaning of pragmatics. However, he misused the marker in the sentence, which provides additional evidence of the students’ lack of competence in the use of DMs, as well as their low proficiency in English.

The third most frequently used DM was “or”, mostly employed for the purpose of indicating choices or different suggestions. Had the participants been sufficiently proficient in...
English and had the ability to apply DMs properly, this marker would not have been used so frequently in their essays.

**Combining Discourse Markers**

A combination of DMs can occur in written texts, either across categories or in a single category (e.g., CDMs or IDM). Given the students’ inability to use DMs properly, it was not expected that any examples of combining DMs would be found. However, there were a few instances of combinations of two DMs not identified in previous research to the best of our knowledge. For instance, one of the students used “but” in combination with “also”:

> Words have a literal meaning that can be analyzed for its truth or falsehood. **But** words **also** can be used to effect change in the word, to perform actions.

In another example, a student combined “however” and “although”:

> **However, although** both are inscribed by context and the organization of language to produce meaning in specific circumstances, pragmatics might be regarded a sub-system of discourse analysis if they are both understood as systems.

We do not argue that these examples should be linguistically accurate, but they reveal misunderstandings among students concerning the functions of DMs and how they can be employed or combined. For instance, it would be more appropriate to use “however” instead of “but” and to put “also” after “can”. Moreover, the underuse of combinations of DMs in the students’ writing highlights the need to clarify the potential benefits of combining DMs for the quality and clarity of their work.

**Discussion**

All in all, the results of this study concerning which DMs were used by Saudi senior university students majoring in English and the reasons behind their use are in line with some previous studies which highlighted that Arab EFL students struggle with the appropriate use of DMs (see Fareh et al., 2020). The obstacles range from the process of recognizing DMs to the ability to produce them. This can be seen from some DMs' misuse, underuse, and overuse, regardless of the linguistic value added to the overall meaning. Even if they were able to recognize the functions of some DMs, their ability to produce them properly is limited. These obstacles are evidently present at the level of employing individual markers.

In addition, it can be argued that the ability to combine DMs is beyond their current understanding based on the examples presented above. It is necessary to evaluate these issues and determine the reasons behind this deficiency. One possible reason is the students’ low level of English. Although they were senior university students majoring in English, the use of DMs was far below the expected level. Lack of a teaching focus on the development of strategies is another possible reason for this deficiency as lecturers may not pay adequate attention to the use of DMs in writing. The curriculum and textbooks may be additional factors in educating EFL students how to use DMs. These findings are in line with some previous studies, such as those of Fareh (2014). Indeed, in a recent study, Fareh et al. (2020) concluded that EFL texts are an issue that should be considered since they do not incorporate sufficient activities and tasks concerning DMs, which prompted the methodological deficiency of EFL teaching in schools and
universities. Therefore, it is crucial that instructors pay attention to this issue and include DMs in their teaching practice and use appropriate materials.

Conclusion

This study aimed to highlight the use of DMs among senior university students majoring in English in Saudi Arabia. The outcomes of this research are in line with several studies concerning the use of DMs by EFL students. It was evident that the EFL students’ deficiencies in employing DMs in their writing were due to the limited exposure they have to DMs in their courses. More attention needs to be paid to this issue, especially by instructors. In addition, the curriculum should provide opportunities for EFL students to learn how to employ DMs in their writing. For instance, instructors could employ different tasks in their classes to instruct students in the use of DMs. Students would then be likely to reflect this knowledge in their writing. This is particularly important for EFL students, given that if they struggle with the use of markers individually, combining DMs in their writing will still be harder to achieve. The curriculum and textbooks may be additional factors in educating EFL students on how to use DMs. Thus, it is crucial that instructors pay attention to this issue and include DMs in their teaching practice as well as using the appropriate materials.

About the author

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Using Genre-Based Approach to Teach Persuasive Netvertisement for English Learners in a Chinese Vocational College

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Abstract
This paper is part of the researcher’s Ph.D. thesis to deploy and develop the potential of genre-based pedagogy of systemic functional linguistics to support business-major English language learners’ development of persuasive strategies in the written discourse of online advertisement. Given the “value” of netvertisement in motivating consumption, it is vital for non-native English speakers preparing to participate in international e-commerce to take control of the current genre. The research question is how a genre-based writing class can promote students’ persuasive netvertisement with appropriate vocabulary, text organization, and strategies of engagement, graduation, and manipulation of information packaging. This paper describes an instructional intervention in Chinese vocational college using genre-based Curriculum Cycle to involve 51 student participants—coming from two classes—in the learning and teaching of persuasive netvertisement. Results identified the significant improvement between pre-and post-tutorial with Wilcoxon Test. Meanwhile, textual analysis of the two randomly selected writings supported the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of the reduced listing of phrases, expanded vocabulary to describe a broader range of products, and improved use of persuasive strategies of engagement (e.g., questioning), graduation (e.g., the metaphorical scenario in image design), and manipulation (e.g., use of subtitling, varied thematic structures). The findings indicate the potential of a genre-based approach in promoting college students’ persuasive practices in netvertisement writing.

Keywords: Chinese English learners, Design-based research, English for special purposes, genre-based approach, intervention, netvertisement, persuasion

Introduction

The ever-changing written modes of business allow for the shifted attention to the teaching of the interpersonal skills that cope with the trend where the messages become short, brief, denotive, and multimodal. Online advertising through well-established e-commerce sites like Amazon, eBay, and Alibaba, stands out of the other more conventional means in its availability through hand-held electronic devices, its audience who goes comparison shopping, and its fragmented, denotative, and organized language with bullet points. This new and important digital advertising genre is rarely introduced to English language classes in Chinese vocational colleges. Though there have been a couple of studies revealing the lexico-grammatical features of netadvertisement (Palmer, 1999; Labradora, Ramóna, Alaiz-Moretónb, & Sanjurjo-Gonzálezb, 2014), they are merely descriptive and do not relate their findings to pedagogical theories. Teaching materials on advertisement writing from English as a foreign language are unavailable.

Educational linguists of genre-based pedagogy (GBP) embrace the idea of making explicit recurrent linguistic patterns within socially and culturally valued genres. According to systemic functional linguistics (SFL), writing an effective netvertisement requires the knowledge and skills of appropriate linguistic meaning-making resources (e.g., text structure, vocabulary, rhetorical strategies), bound by contextual factors of field, mode, and tenor, to influence readers during the buying decision process. The explicit teaching of the persuasive features of language is crucial for beginners to raise genre awareness and use lexico-grammatical resources to inform and persuade the target customers.

This study draws upon the SFL-GBP Curriculum Cycle (Gibbons, 2002) and seeks to answer the research question: How does the SFL-GBP writing class promote students’ production of persuasive netvertisement with appropriate vocabulary, text organization, and the strategies of engagement, graduation, and manipulation of information packaging? In this study, persuasion refers to the effect or the consequence of an efficient discourse where effective rhetorical strategies contribute to persuasiveness but do not guarantee the fulfillment of the expected purchase result (i.e., the perlocutionary effect). The following sections will discuss the implementation and results of an English writing intervention, carried out with 51 business-major students in a Chinese college, to help them use rhetorical strategies to produce persuasive netvertisement, an emerging and essential text type of advertisement.

This paper will first offer the theoretical construction of persuasion in the discourse of netadvertisement (to inform the learning goal) and then review the teaching and learning cycle by SFL-GBP (to inspire the tutorial plan). The Methods section briefly describes the intervention—the experiment stage in Design-Based Research (DBR)—before moving on to the later sections of findings, discussion, and conclusion.

Literature Review

Persuasive Netadvertisement as the Learning Goal

Persuasive strategies in English advertising have been discussed by discourse analysis studies. Emphasizing the pedagogical purpose of teaching English in professional settings, ESP researchers like Bhatia (2004) identified a series of moves that formed the promotional genre and proposed a move-structural model for advertisement as a sub-genre of promotion that includes
nine significant moves (see Table one). Despite Bhatia’s tentative analysis of only one example advertisement in his seminal work, his move-structural model was supported by later studies of online and print adverts whose primary purpose was to persuade the readers or sway their decisions (Al-Attar, 2017; Chaidet & Pupipat, 2021).

Table 1. Move-structural model in an advertisement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Headlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move 2</td>
<td>Targeting the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 3</td>
<td>Justifying the product/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- by indicating the importance/need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- by establishing the niche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 4</td>
<td>Detailing the product/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- by identifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- by describing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- by indicating the value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 5</td>
<td>Establishing credentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 6</td>
<td>Endorsement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 7</td>
<td>Offering incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 8</td>
<td>Using pressure tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 9</td>
<td>Soliciting responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note 1. Adapted from Bhatia (2004, p. 65)*

In the domain of print advertising, research that embraces the importance of interpersonal functions has proposed a list of discursive strategies to overcome the possible difficulties and confusion in the communication between advertisers and mass audiences. These strategies can include foregrounding techniques such as alliteration and invented words, preference of rhetorical questions and directives, imitating an informal conversation, using figurative language such as metaphor and metonymy (Fuertes-Olivera, Velasco-Sacristán, Arribas-Baño, & Samaniego-Fernández, 2001).

Digital advertising distinguishes itself from the traditional mass advertising discourse in using an interactive mode of online communication, adopting new persuasive strategies, and offering multimodal content. Labrador et al. (2014) identified frequent linguistic elements of indicating positive evaluation (e.g., multiple modifiers) and informal style (e.g., personal pronouns) from their comparative corpus of online advertisement of electronic products selected from the large retail webinars like El Corte Inglés in Spain and Walmart in the English world. Recent scholars like Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) attempted to develop a comprehensive model exploring the interplay between multiple modalities (including language, visual codes, sound, and even music) that realized the discourse in a specific communication situation. Their proposal of visual grammar moved beyond print advertisement (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) to include digital advertisement through social media like Facebook (Saladri, Dash, & Dash, 2020) and Instagram (Hidarto, 2021). However, these descriptive findings have rarely been used in pedagogical practices.

Despite the increasingly elaborated analysis of the lexico-grammatical features of persuasion, researchers seem to be somewhat influenced by classic Aristotle’s Rhetoric: logos (logic and reason), ethos (credibility and trustworthiness), and pathos (emotions) (Alexander, Michelle, & Christopher, 2001; Mercedes, 2019). Meanwhile, there has been limited SFL
literature on persuasion in online advertising with a systemic analysis proposal. Established frameworks like Hyland’s (2005) metadiscourse have been used in a range of contexts (Ngo & Unsworth, 2015) but have been scant in advertising (Al-Subhi, 2021). In the current discourse of netvertisement, this study constructs persuasion based on three concepts of engagement, graduation, and manipulation.

Firstly, persuasion and engagement are intrinsically related. To win the favor and motivate the readers’ final decision, businesses need to anticipate their audience’s expectations, which are influenced by specific cultural and institutional values and beliefs, to reach them. In the openly interactive discourse of netvertisement, engagement is central to the co-creation of values and indeed to the overall value of the product. Two influential theoretical frameworks of evaluation, Model of Interaction (Hyland, 2005) and the Appraisal System (Martin & White, 2005), propose a list of structures that connect to the audience and signal the interactive nature of language use.

Secondly, graduation carries interpersonal persuasive weight as it overlaps with the intensity of attitudinal meanings and plays a dialogistic role (Martin & White, 2005) in scaling the degree of authorial voice in the value positions in association with the values of prototypicality shared across the community and degree of aligning readers into the value position being advanced. Linguistic resources include markers like *large, greatly, slightly* to highlight the intensification and quantification, and phrases like *sort of* and *on earth* to soften and sharpen the focus.

Thirdly, persuasion is manipulative, and rhetorical choices release the manipulative potential of information packaging. According to Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985), there is a habitual association between given information and thematic position (i.e., clause-initial) and between new information and rhematic position (i.e., not clause-initial). The
structuring of given and new information could be manipulated by skilled rhetoricians like Chomsky, whose argument is difficult to challenge but wise to accept (Hoey, 1999). The sentence below shows an example of manipulative evaluation in a thematic position.

1) The luxurious fabric can help keep your hair soft, moisturized, and tangle free. [from Amazon.com: YANIBEST Silk Pillowcase for Hair and Skin]

In contrast to the rhematic complementary position, the evaluation “luxurious” embedded in the premodification of a noun makes it more readily acceptable by the readers as given information or common ground, which exempts the writer from the need to build any stage for justification for the evaluation.

Finally, persuasion is multimodal since not only the words persuade, but all modes of communication that accompany verbal messages contribute to persuasive effects. Images and sometimes audios not only engage the reader’s attention (engagement), highlight the promotional messages that the verbal text indicates (graduation) but also influence the perception of these messages (manipulation). In other words, the manipulative power can be found in visual patterns where elements in an image receive salience by the size, color, strength of vectors, and their placements in relevance to the other elements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020). According to the polarized and centered principles of organization, the right side is associated with new information and the top side as abstract and general information. Meanwhile, the centered position carries the nucleus of information compared to marginal elements.

**Systemic Functional Linguistics Genre-Based Approach as the Design Equation**

To explicitly address the lexico-grammatical resources in netvertisement, this study adopts an SFL genre-based approach that has its theoretical base from the Sydney School developed by M. A. K Halliday and his followers with a pedagogical interest in teaching practices built on Hallidayan strata of language and systems of linguistic analysis. One issue around the effectiveness of GBP in writing is that students may be slow in the acquisition of genre-appropriate linguistic resources. This problem can be alleviated by explicitly focusing on syntactic structures indicative of academic language practices (Beers & Nagy, 2011; Afifi, 2020). In this study, syntactic and phraseological patterns of high frequency in the model texts will be highlighted, analyzed, and summarized in each class.

Another issue of SFL-GBP is that it is too prescriptive in teaching static language features directly to the students (Freedman & Medway, 2005; New London Group, 1996). On the one hand, to address this problem, Rose and Martin (2012) suggest that students be given opportunities to discuss, debate, and appreciate the text critically in terms of its contexts and social purposes. This suggestion of critical thinking includes, for example, asking students, “Why are personal pronouns like ‘you’ and ‘we’ more frequently expected and used in the netvertisement?” instead of giving students the rubrics of linguistic knowledge about texts. Derewianka (2003) makes a theoretical explanation on the prescriptivism and implicit static vision: register does not “determine” the language choices but is an indicator of probability. The context of situation is fluid depending on the negotiation of subsequent choices. On the other hand, the criticism on the static reproduction of a “closed” set of resources implies the critical role creative language plays in persuading the consumers. For business students who are new to
the discourse of netvertisement, creativity depends on the control of genre-specific resources without which students cannot produce appropriate writings, not to mention such creative strategies as alliteration, punchlines, and striking metaphors.

Gibbons (2002) visualized four stages of the Curriculum Cycle (or the teaching and learning cycle) by Derewianka (1990) and other genre theorists of the Australian school (see Figure two). The current design of teaching and learning followed the four stages to apprentice learners towards the development of genre-specific resources.

Methods
Design of Intervention
The instructional model, the Curriculum Cycle (Gibbons, 2002), proposes four cyclic stages of learning and teaching, from Building the Field, Deconstruction, Joint Construction to Independent Construction, that constitutes the flow of each unit. Table two outlines three phases of the writing intervention and the main activities within each unit.

Table 2. A summary of the flow of units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase One: Building the Field</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>What does a persuasive netvertisement look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example activity: to discuss impressive advertisement, writing strategies, moves and practice writing with a template (a moon lamp)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase Two: Improving on persuasive writing</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>Graduation strategy to persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example activity: to rank the critical features of pillowcases, build vocabulary base of graduation markers, modify texts, and design images (a high-tech pillowcase)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Unit 3                                   | Engaging “you” to persuasion |
| Example activity: to examine and introduce the concept of engagement, identify engagement levels across different discourses, identify engagement language, modify the sample text (a board game) |

| Unit 4                                   | Manipulating information packaging |
| Example activity: to practice and discuss the effects of thematization, identify topical, textual, and interpersonal themes in sample texts, examine the information values in promotional images, modify the draft writing (an electronic tablet, a skincare product) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase Three: Review and assessment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 5</td>
<td>Review and independent writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. The Curriculum Cycle (Adapted from Gibbons, 2002, p. 110)
Example activity: to discuss and review move structure and persuasive language resources, identify persuasive features of language in a model text, write independently for a product (choosing from intelligent electronic devices, family entertainment, daily care)

The intervention was run for 17 weeks for the tourism class and 19 weeks for the logistics class due to the timetable of different semesters and adaptations made between the two iterations. Typically, students were assigned one session of English class per week, equal to four class periods, that is, 180 minutes in total.

Participants
The current study initially employed 57 student participants coming from two classes, “18 Tourism and Management 2” with 30 students and “19 Logistics and Management 1” with 27 students, both of which belonged to the TAFE school running as a part of a joint program of an advanced vocational degree between China and Australia. At the outset of the current study, the two classes have shown high passing rates in CET4 (>75%). Most of the participants have been able to communicate fluently with teachers from the Australian party, as they have acquired basic business speaking and writing skills from the Australian business courses, especially in genres like marketing plans, strategy proposals, and case study analysis.

This teaching experiment was part of my Ph.D. project—design-based research (DBR) with two iterations of design and implementation following the process model by Bakker and van Eerde (2015). Considering the primary research question, this paper does not report the iterative process of design and redesign of the instruction. Still, it focuses on the results of pre-and post-tutorial writings and a detailed analysis of two individual students’ writings.

The current study involved student participants from two classes (the tourism class in Iteration One and the logistics class in Iteration Two). Graduates of these two majors are likely to enter the industry of cross-border e-commerce, which usually requires knowledge and skill in intercultural communication and logistics management. Towards the end of data collection, the researcher decided that there were only 26 effective learner participants in Iteration One and 25 participants in Iteration Two, as these students attended most sessions on time, completed worksheets in class, and submitted samples for both pre-and post-tutorials (see, Appendix A, for attendance and tentative appraisal for local writing tasks). The students’ names were coded (pseudonym) in alphabetic ordering.

Data Collection
This study used a pre-and post-tutorial test design to answer the research questions of how the writing intervention improved learners’ writing of persuasive netvertisement. Before the writing tutorial, the two classes attended the test for writing a netvertisement of any products they were familiar with in daily life. Students should choose one product type by themselves as it was afraid that students could find trouble finding the right words or jargon to describe the designated products. In the post-tutorial test, students were required to write for a netvertisement of the product for daily uses by their choice within 45 minutes. In both tests, students received printed worksheets with typed guidelines that asked students to work independently with no plagiarism or external resources.
The original rubric (see Figure three) was based on the theoretical construction of persuasion discussed in the Literature Review. It should be noted that the analysis is qualitative. The evaluation of the use of engagement devices, for example, does not depend on the frequencies of direct address you, imperatives, or proclaims but instead the interpersonal functions of these meaning-making choices could achieve. This qualitative appraisal may lead to concerns over the subjectivity of the marking process, and the rest of the section deals with the fears over reliability in detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasive Net-ad: Performance criteria and marking scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Minimal language mistakes, well-formed and meaningful structures &gt; frequent errors that make it hard to read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Following essential move structures &gt; a combination of scattered phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Using persuasive strategies &gt; minimal persuasive strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Graduation markers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. individual intensifier: super, quite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. infused word (lexis): best, perfect, stunning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. repetition: It gives you smooth experience of streaming. Perfect for online business meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. metaphor: feel like spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Engaging 'you' markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Low engagement: never, no; surely, of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. High engagement: inclusive 'we', you, imperative祈使句, question疑问句; probably, according to sb.,…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Manipulating (操纵利用) information packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. To stress (强调) subtitles, marked theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. To take authorial evaluation for granted ('主观评价'当作已接受信息): evaluation embedded in Subject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: The writing score equals the sum of each category. The writing that fails to be finished gets 0. The writing that gets 0 to 2.5 is decided to be Not Competent, while the writing that gets 3 to 5 is Competent

*Figure 3. The rubric of functional analysis of persuasive nevertisement writings*

To establish reliable scoring results, the researcher asked two colleagues, who have academic backgrounds in SFL, to help rate a randomly selected list of 15 writing samples by established brands (three pieces from banner netvertisement on Amazon.com) and by the student participants (three pieces from pre-/post-tutorial tests). The two raters (Rater 1 and Rater 2) were introduced the development of the rubric of functional analysis and the design of the intervention. At the outset of co-rating, we discussed one sample writing together and reviewed details of the marking scale. The scores were calculated for the correlation between Rater 1/Rater me (Pearson’s r=0.965) and Rater 2/Rater me (Pearson’s r=0.976) ratings (see Appendix B for raw data). Despite small samples, the differences in scores indicated close agreement among three raters and satisfactory internal consistency.

**Results**

*Writing Intervention: The Curriculum Cycle*

This section devotes to the detailed description of the writing intervention by including excerpts of instructional conversations, in-class writings, and handouts during class activities.
Phase One

The whole Phase One represented the first stage of the Curriculum Cycle—Building the Field—which aimed to raise the awareness of the genre of persuasion by developing background knowledge of the essential structure of discourse and possible linguistic resources of persuasive functions (i.e., persuasive strategies in the teaching context).

To build the background knowledge of the common persuasive elements within an advertisement, we read and shared personal experiences in impressive storylines, slogans, endorsements, and even music. The “official” instructions by e-commerce platforms were extracted and adapted to design a reading comprehension activity, which was supposed to help students develop the general idea of what a “proper” piece of netvertisement should be. While the “official” guidelines included wide product ranges, the researcher focused on electronic and smart devices that were familiar products for students and oriented to reason appeal. The reading activity should serve as a good starting point to build the bases of technical vocabulary like “black painted finish.”

After the warm-up, the idea of the genre was introduced to students by asking students to identify the discourse of netvertisement based on the overall purpose, structure, and language features. The introduction to genre led to the next phase of discussing how discursive moves contributed to the general purpose of persuasion, during which students brainstormed necessary steps (or moves) in netvertisement before matching the sentences with corresponding moves like Headlines (and images), Detailing the product or services, Establishing credentials, and Offering incentives.

To enhance the idea of genre, the researcher introduced the students to the SFL-GBP genre model (Derewianka, 2003), where lexico-grammatical choices affected the genre’s development and were affected by contextual factors like register, field, and tenor. Since students in the first iteration found it challenging to understand the linguistics jargon, the second iteration avoided the direct explanation of the genre model but highlighted the interaction between persuasive language and the customer-advertiser relationship (interpersonal meta-functions). The second iteration designed a discussion activity where students rated the probability of their decision of purchase in four promotional situations of different interpersonal relationships between interactants. In this activity, students concluded that a close, reliable, and authentic relationship was beneficial to the communicative purpose of persuasion. They realized that language enabled meanings to fulfill different interpersonal (meta)functions. Till then, it was believed that students had developed a meta-language repertoire (e.g., interpersonal relationship, move, communicative purpose) for text analysis in the following units of persuasive strategies.

Towards the end of the unit, students were asked to practice writing for a household moon lamp, a topic similar to the sample text of electric lights in the previous reading and identification tasks.

In Summary, Phase One established the actual development of students (i.e., the final writing product) or at least had general ideas of what to write about in the texts. This knowledge foundation was necessary before students proceeded to the next phase of rhetorical strategies, where greater focus would be on the conception of evaluation, detailed functional analysis, and writing improvement through persuasive features of the English language.
Phase Two

This phase constituted the core component of the writing intervention, beginning from the awareness of the persuasive forces of the three rhetorical strategies (three units) and moving toward the independent production of netvertisement. There were four sessions in sequence, one for graduation, one for engagement, and the last two for manipulation. The unit of manipulative strategies deserved greater time for the new grammatical concepts of the Theme system concerning information packaging.

Activities at the first stage Building the Field in each unit, despite varied designs in detail, aimed to 1) elicit and expand students’ existing lexico-grammatical resources of graduation, engagement, and manipulation of information packaging, and 2) discuss and understand the features and evaluations of a product type that would be the focus of the current unit. Unit Four inspired students’ curiosity about their “instinct” of structuring phrases into a sentence and explored the effects of different thematized elements in depth.

Unit Four spent one whole session building students’ grammatical knowledge of different Themes associated with their information value and content knowledge of the crucial parameters of a smart tablet. In comparison, the first preparation stages (i.e., Building the field) in Unit Two and Unit Three took less time as students could list several graduation and engagement markers and discuss their interpersonal effects to conclude the importance of building a trustworthy, reliable, and authentic reader-writer relationship.

The second stage, Deconstruction, aimed to build a vocabulary base of target products, support understanding of specialized product features, and identify and appreciate the persuasive forces driven by discursive moves and the rhetorical strategies of graduation, engagement, and manipulation. These purposes were achieved by including the analytical exercise of move-structures and lexico-grammatical (and image) features of persuasive strategies in at least two sample netvertisement, along with the language “toolbox” development by noting down useful nominal and verbal groups for evaluation and description. When decoding the model texts in the graduation unit, students made mistakes when they did not distinguish different types of graduation markers and intentionally missed the items that were new and difficult to them. In this case, the researcher decided not to spend time re-stressing varied types of graduation but to facilitate explicit instructions on how to increase the degree of intensity. Table three records an example instructional conversation that follows the reading strategies by the Reading to Learn approach based on SFL-GBP.

Table 3. An example excerpt of guided reading (learning about affixes for graduation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>What compound words can you identify? I mean hecheng ci that can be marked by a hyphen.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Identify</td>
<td>Arch-chill, Q-Max, ultra-elasticity, wave-shaped.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Affirm</td>
<td>Good job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Identify</td>
<td>Arch-chill, ultra-elasticity, and Q-Max?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Affirm</td>
<td>Arch-chill, ultra-elasticity, correct. But no for Q-Max.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborate</td>
<td>Q-Max represents a measurement of the maximum level of coolness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>The affixes like arch- and ultra-mean extreme, the best among others. Arch-chill is a locally made word and being new strengthens its heightening effect. Arch-chill and arch-elasticity expressed a more potent message than very chill and very elastic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now circle “arch” and “ultra.”
In Unit Four, the Deconstruction stage asked students to act amateur corpus linguists calculating and concluding the nominal group inductively with attributive phrases as the most frequent thematic structure (e.g., a nominal group without attributive phrases, imperative verb phrases, infinitive structures). This decoding activity was supposed to enhance learners’ impression of manipulative strategies like dangling modifiers, subtitling, and evaluating Subjects in the netvertisement of electronics and skincare products.

The reading of promotional images was put towards the end of the Deconstruction stage in each unit after the learners discussed the effects of rhetorical strategies in verbal massages. The instructional conversations moved from the teacher’s strategy introduction to a guided discussion of sample images. Unexpectedly, most students found little problem in multimodal analysis activity. One good example was Unit Four (see Figure four), where students working in groups were able to explain the information value of eye-catching elements by promptly using the polarized principle, their artistic “instinct” related to the centered principle (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020), and salience facilitators such as size and color contrast. Despite the learner’s warm responses and active discussions, the effectiveness of this activity for Deconstruction should be reflected in later stages of constructing images for netvertisement.
The following two stages—Joint Construction and Independent Construction—were closely interrelated with blurring transition towards each other. In Vygotsky’s (1978) terms, at the stage of Joint and Independent Construction, the teacher as significant others offers guidance and feedback to improve sample writings, and students are offered opportunities of self-regulation against the template of marking criteria. What learners produce can be recycled under others-regulation, thus rethinking, redrafting, and rewriting until the expected performance is achieved. The close connection between Joint and Independent Construction rationalized the merging of the two stages into one writing activity in each unit.

The writing activities across three units were divided into three parts, the first one for sample modification or teacher-fronted guidance, the second one for independent writing, and the third one for feedback and rewriting. Students were offered the rubric of persuasive netvertisement (see Figure three) before Independent Construction, which would guide independent writing with established criteria and remind students of what they learned and what they were going to learn.

Incidentally, every piece of individual work was marked and recorded at the end of each unit, though the data were not analyzed by the current paper. The primary purpose was to understand students’ progress and examine any weaknesses that should be addressed immediately in the subsequent sessions or iterative cycle according to the nature of DBR.

In Unit Four, the feedback stage took longer than expected for students’ devotion to the discussion. In addition to teacher-centered comments, student audiences actively shared their opinions about the persuasiveness and fluency of the language used in a selected list of six student writings on the smartboard. In the conversational excerpt below, students gave practical suggestions to their peers and held a semi-instructional interaction on engaging questions and subtitled strategies.

**Table 4. Conversation transcript excerpt of logistics class**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;S01&gt; Wo jude ni keyiyong shewen yingqi haoqi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Translation: I think you should use rhetorical questions to arouse their curiosity.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;S02&gt; Ni ye keyiyong a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Translation: You should use questions too.)</td>
</tr>
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Using Genre-Based Approach to Teach Persuasive Netvertisement

Note. <S01> Student Lf, <S02> Student Lc

Such others-regulation as peer-to-peer feedback could be helpful to both parties—the receiver and the commenter—who were encouraged to recall the previously taught persuasive strategies critically.

The following three samples were taken from one student randomly to display any traces of progress in the persuasive strategies of manipulating information packaging.

Figure 5. Student Ya’s writings for Unit Four of logistics class

Writing transcript 1
Oxford phone 5G New model and new chip Large battery super clear camera

▪ Power to everything possible: The phone consists of newly-developed Kirin 98000, Android 12.0 and super light glass material. Ensure users to have great user experience. You can work and play hard. 60 megapixel HD front camera and 80 megapixel HD rear camera make shooting more clearly.

▪ Access to cutting-edge apps: The excellent experience of softwares means we can upload, upgrade, feedback and rank the app experience together with the global users in the Oxford community.

▪ Android 12.0 is more inclusive so that it supports the applications that need AI technical support.

Writing transcript 2

YourIdeal Man Facewash gentle soft power tough

▪ Many healthy ingredients: Vitamin C, Aloe vera, palm oil can gently clean the skin for everyone, especially the sensitive skin.

▪ Use this facewash, and remove dead skin cell, pores effectively.
The first draft demonstrated the learner’s awareness of the manipulative power of language by embedding authorial evaluation into the thematic nominal group, for example, “this clear picture presentation” and “the excellent user experience,” which enforced the value of Oxford phone to be understood as given information. Student Ya was believed to have acquired of critical features and functions of a smartphone, as was evident in her coherent and reasonable evaluation and description of an “imagined” mobile phone.

In the second draft of male facewash, Student Ya used the persuasive strategies and linguistic resources highlighted in the modeling stage. The dangling modifier, for example, was found in “Mixed with the coolness of the night, the freshing mint calms you down in your haste to date,” and it up took some energy of thematicity that set the environment for the effects of “freshing mint.” It was interesting to note students’ design of images that strictly followed the horizontally polarized pattern of organization: photos were found on the left side as given information while slogans or titles on the right for new information that required the reader’s attention and interest.

In the third draft, there was noticeable progress in comparison with the earlier week when students had limited resources (e.g., pronouns “it” and “you” and the name of the product) to fulfill the Theme position. Student Ya’s subtitling was improved in her third writing that accurately summarized the bullet paragraph and took the consistent form of a nominal group (attributive adjective + noun phrase). In general, all three writings were Contemporary Satisfactory according to the rubric in Figure three.

Phase Three
Phase Three occurred in the final session that involved two stages in sequence, review and assessment. In the review part, the teacher clarified the persuasive language features and strategies in two model texts. The model text on an intelligent electronic tablet was selected and analyzed cautiously to help students in the later assessment stage that required learners to write on the topic of electronics. In the assessment part, students were required to write two pieces of netvertisement for an electric NBCC tablet and a product for daily use from three, but not limited to, suggested choices—perfume, facewash, and a noodle-pick board game.
Comparison of Pre- and Post-Tutorial Scores

Competent writings of Iteration One increased from 0 to 69% between pre-and post-tutorial submissions, and Iteration Two showed the growth of Competent writings by 68% after the intervention program (see Appendix A). The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed Ranks Test was used to compare the pretest and posttest scores for three categories of performance: (a) language mistakes that impact the flow of reading, (b) discursive moves of the genre, and (c) three persuasive strategies of graduation, engagement and manipulating information packaging. This non-parametric test aimed to reveal any change, or hopefully progress, in the mean ranks of one sample group of participants, 26 students in tourism class and 25 students in logistics class, who should produce Competent writings after attending the instructional intervention.

The raw data of two groups—pre-and post-tutorial (or pretest and posttest)—were used to compute each sample’s rank of the absolute value of difference. For the tourism class, the sum of the positive ranks (W+) was 0, and the sum of negative ranks (W-) was 253, and hence the test statistics T (T=min{W+, W−}) was 0. The critical value for the significance level p<0.01 provided, the null hypothesis was rejected if the type of tail T ≤48. Since T=0≤48, there was enough evidence to claim that the population median of differences was different than 0 at a significance level of 0.01. Similar results were found in the logistics class as the sum of W+ was 33, the sum of W−267, and hence T=min{W+, W−} 33. Given the significance level p<0.01, the null hypothesis was rejected if the type of tail T≤61. The second class showed T=33≤61, indicating the significant changes between the two test results. Appendix B reports the raw data and preliminary mathematical results.

Functional Analysis

This session conducts a detailed functional analysis of the pre- and post-tutorial writings of two randomly chosen students—Student L1 from the tourism class and La from the logistics class—among the 51 participants with good attendance rates. The writing scripts and appraisals are attached to Appendix C.

Student L1’s writing scores improved from one to four. In her pretest writing, there were obscure expressions like “made of high-quality soil with ...comfortable hand feel” and “high hiding effect” that made the writing hard to read. An unexpected move Soliciting responses “Pay with Alipay or bank card” was placed between the two moves Headlines and Detailing the product or service. More seriously, her writing featured a simple listing of unrelated phrases throughout the paper and minimal engagement language. Yet, student L1 gained one credit for using graduation strategies effectively, as was found in “texture is as smooth as silk” to intensify the smooth touch of the mug. The images visualized and repeated the verbal messages about the critical product feature of heat-changing colors.

In her posttest writings, Student L1 strictly followed the move structure from Headlines (and images), Detailing the product, to Offering incentives to buy. Besides, the three persuasive strategies were used effectively. A variety of graduation markers could be identified, including “perfect,” “perfectly,” “millions of,” “super,” and “excellent.” Two main types of engagement markers—directives like “enjoy the perfect experience...” and direct addressing like “you” and “your”—were used to initiate the dialogue with readers and effectively built an interactive reader-writer relationship. The writer employed subtitling strategies that highlighted the critical
information and embedded authorial evaluation like “strong,” “excellent,” “striking,” and “efficient” into thematic structures that made the utterance taken for granted. The clause beginnings featured diverse structures, like “with dual-band enhanced WiFi” and “Millions of movies, TV episodes, songs, books, apps and games,” to fulfill a thematic function. This diversity demonstrated a significant improvement since the pretest writing, where the structures typically began with a nominal group consisting of an article and a noun. However, the persuasiveness was reduced by frequent misspellings (e.g., “swell-smelling”), the wrong choice of mood (e.g., “you will enjoy 5G service and provide 90-day limited warranty service”), and obscure collocations (e.g., “Enjoy the progress of washing”)

Student La received two credits in her pre-tutorial writing (see Appendix C). Her writing was easy to understand with well-formed and meaningful structures despite minor language mistakes. However, the writer missed detailing the important luminous feature of the cup, leading to the discrepancy between the image and product description. Linguistic features of the persuasive language were rarely found in pre-tutorial writing. Still, student La manipulated the reader’s attention to the product, in images, by the washout of the background environment and by high tonal contrast.

At the end of the intervention, student La’s writing improved in the move structure and persuasive strategies, but her problem of combining phrases in a rushed and cursory way remained still. In other words, her post-tutorial writings were weak in making the message clear and coherent despite grammatically legal structures. One good example of broken cause-effect logic was the bullet-point of “a perfect photo” as the qualities of cameras barely justified the result that users would “see,” rather than “take,” nice photos by the tablet. The headline “Rose series, love with heart” was arguably incomplete and unclear for missing out the product category, for example, Esprit de Parfum or Eau de Cologne. Nevertheless, her writings were strong in strictly following the move structure of the promotional genre and in the use of graduation markers (e.g., “super,” “perfect,” “like the heavy dew on the grass”). Compared to her earlier writing, student La began to use engagement markers (“you”) and a subtitling strategy that inserted authorial evaluations. Still, the linguistic features of the persuasive language were limited and unvaried. For example, the thematic structure “With…, you can …” (a prepositional phrase) was repeated throughout the two pieces of netvertisement.

Discussion

In general, the Competent writings of the two classes (51 students) across two iterations rose significantly from 0 to 68% and 69% after the writing tutorial. The improvement should suffice to indicate how the SFL-GBP writing intervention supported the teaching and learning of persuasive netvertisement in the local context. The two classes improved on their move structures and engagement, graduation, manipulation strategies. The in-depth functional analysis of two individual students revealed a reduced listing of phrases, expanded vocabulary to describe digital, skincare, and everyday products, increased use of engagement and graduation markers, subtitling strategy, centered principle of image design. The weaknesses lay in the continued favor of “safe” options of persuasive techniques, that is, to limit their linguistic choices to several structures (e.g., dangling modifier “with”) and to several graduation and engagement markers (e.g., “super,” “perfect,” “you”).
The current project attempts to fill the gap between abundant descriptive linguistic analysis and pedagogical applications in the discourse of netvertisement. Empirically, the intervention program is a workable model in teaching persuasive writing of netvertisement that has been shaped by “participant expertise,” by input from “literature,” and by cycles of “field testing” (McKenney & Reeves, 2012, p. 425). The originally developed and tested teaching resources (e.g., handout, syllabus, mini-corpus of netvertisement) represent a meaningful product of educational design research that models the teaching of persuasive writing. Theoretically, the study offers insights and practices that localize the theories of high generality, such as Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural view of learning and Gibbons’s (2002) Curriculum Cycle into the Chinese context of vocational education.

Conclusion

The current project guided student participants into the genre of persuasion by developing a set of genre-specific lexicogrammatical and semiotic resources. There was a significant increase in Competent writings from pre-tutorial (0%) to post-tutorial writings (68% and 69%) across two iterations. A detailed functional analysis of two students, L1 and La, revealed improved generic move structure, engagement and graduation markers, subtitling strategy, and centered principle in image design. However, their writings featured unvaried lexicogrammatical choices of persuasion and a poorly coherent and logical stance. The findings addressed the gap between descriptive linguistic analysis (theories) and pedagogical applications (empirical studies) by relating functional grammar to pedagogical grammar in the design of an English classroom.

The instructional intervention is yet to be fully transferred to other contexts. The researcher asked two colleagues to choose any activities or tools they found helpful in their ESP writing courses. Though they both gave positive feedback in general, the transferability of the current intervention was somewhat limited as the generalization by DBR was restricted to the Chinese culture and students in the local vocational college.

Admittedly, the current intervention can be “coarse” in the teaching and learning of promotional image designs (e.g., overlooking the promotional audios). A more comprehensive writing course in the future should address “new literacy” on multimodal genres, which involves analysis and discussions on verbal, visual, and aural messages. The idea of “new literacies” broadly refers to the literacy practices developed through digital communication technology and is embraced by a range of linguists and educational practitioners (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020; Martin & Rose, 2007). These researchers have realized the increasingly important role and influence brought by non-verbal modes, often more visual, on the meanings in communication in the context of business communication and education (Lillis & McKinney, 2003). It is interesting to see how SFL and its genre-based view of multimodality could inform the development and refinement of the current persuasive writing course to help students construct netvertisement with vital semiotic resources of different modes.
About the author
Yi He is a Ph.D. student at the Assumption University of Thailand. While studying for the degree, Yi He has been working as a teaching fellow of courses of English for specific purposes in Ningbo City College since 2017. Her research interests include pedagogical grammar, genre-based pedagogy, and corpus linguistics. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2051-0855

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Appendices
Appendix A
Attendance sheet of two classes

Attendance sheet of 18 Class of Tourism and Management 1 (30 students) in Iteration One

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Note: Students with no Student Codes are considered not qualified for the appraisals of pre- and post-tutorial writings.

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Note: TC stands for Temporarily Competent, NTC for Not Temporarily Competent and NA for Not Available to any comments. Only “valid” writings are analysed and marked TC or NTC. Writings are not “valid” when writers have missed part of earlier tasks on the handout or be very late to class.

Attendance sheet of 19 Logistics and Management 2 (27 students) in Iteration Two

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 13. Number 1. March 2022
Using Genre-Based Approach to Teach Persuasive Netvertisement

He
### Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 13. Number 1. March 2022

Using Genre-Based Approach to Teach Persuasive Netvertisement

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### Appendix B

**Raw data of test results and reliability test of rubric**

Reports the raw data and basic statistic results of the tourism class in Iteration One

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Scores of pre-tutorial and post-tutorial writings of Iteration One

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**Notes:**

- Students with no Student Codes are considered not qualified for the appraisals of pre- and post-tutorial writings.

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Note: Students with no Student Codes are considered not qualified for the appraisals of pre- and post-tutorial writings.
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Reports of the raw data and basic statistic results of the logistics class in Iteration Two

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*Students were had been late or absent for more than one session.
Scores of pre- and post-tutorial writings of Iteration Two

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*Students were had been late or absent for more than one session.

Pearson correlation test for inter-rater reliability of rubric

\[ X = \text{rater 1}; Y = \text{rater me} \]

\[ R \text{ Calculation} \]

\[ r = \frac{\sum((X - M_x)(Y - M_y))}{\sqrt{(SS_x)(SS_y)}} \]

\[ r = 37.5 / \sqrt{(38.733)(39)} = 0.9648 \]

\[ X = \text{rater 2}; Y = \text{rater me} \]

\[ R \text{ Calculation} \]

\[ r = \frac{\sum((X - M_x)(Y - M_y))}{\sqrt{(SS_x)(SS_y)}} \]

\[ r = 37.5 / \sqrt{(37.833)(39)} = 0.9763 \]

Appendix C

Two students’ writings for functional analysis

Student L1’s pre-tutorial writing

Heat Changing star wish mug
- Pay with Alipay or bank card
- Made of high-quality soil with fine workmanship and comfortable hand feel
- The cup surface has no traces and texture is as smooth as silk
- High temperature resistant, small printing color difference and high hiding effect
Using Genre-Based Approach to Teach Persuasive Netvertisement

Score: 1
Minimal language mistakes, well-formed and meaningful structures: 0.
Following essential move structure: 0.
Graduation strategies: 1.
Engagement strategies: 0.
Strategies of manipulating information packaging: 0.

Student L1’s post-tutorial writing 1

NBCC Tablet Large Display Super Battery 5G-enabled 2GB of RAM
- Strong authorization: Millions of movies, TV episodes, songs, books, apps and games will satisfy you all requirements of learning, working and entertainment.
- Excellent Function: Enjoy the perfect experience of reading, browsing the web, watching video and listening to music.
- Super evaluation: A smooth touch and fast induction speed will give you the perfect using experience.
- A striking design: with Dual-band enhanced WiFi, you will enjoy 5G service and provide 90-day limited warranty service.

Student L1’s post-tutorial writing 2

A facewash with super function and efficient ingredients
- The efficient function: the function of removing make-up dead skin cells, oil, dirt and other types of pollutants from the skin of the face will help you to unclog pores and prevent skin conditions perfectly.
- Diverse ingredients: The product contains Vitamin C, Tea tree oil, Organic aloe vera and fatty acids. These ingredients can help you to hydrate skin and reduce wrinkles.
- Special experience: The fresh fragrance will make you feel swell-smelling. Enjoy the progress of washing.

Score: 4
Minimal language mistakes, well-formed and meaningful structures: 0
Following essential move structure: 1
Graduation strategies: 1
Engagement strategies: 1
Strategies of manipulating information packaging: 1

Student La’s pre-tutorial writing

Heat Changing Magic Mug
- The picture will be displayed when the water temperature is above 140°F
- Support for personal customization and free choice of photos
- Support Visa card, PayPal payment
Score: 2
Minimal language mistakes, well-formed and meaningful structures: 1
Following essential move structure: 0.5
Graduation strategies: 0
Engagement strategies: 0
Strategies of manipulating information packaging: 0.5

Student La’s post-tutorial writing 1 (same with transcript 2.14)
NBCC Tablet Large Display Super Battery 5G-enabled 2GB of RAM
- [a stunning design] With a super lightweight design, you will enjoy a metal design and 8’’ IPS display.
- [a fast support by 5G] With a fast dual-band and enhanced Wi-Fi, you will have the most perfect experience in watching video and listening to music.
- [a large storage] With a 215GB of internal storage, you can get more than million of movies in tablet.
- [a perfect photo] With a 2MP front and rear-facing cameras, you can see the best and clearest photos on the tablet.
- [90-day limited warranty] With a 90-day limited warranty, you don’t have to worry about it.

Score: 3
Minimal language mistakes, well-formed and meaningful structures: 0
Following essential move structure: 1
Graduation strategies: 1
Engagement strategies: 0.5
Strategies of manipulating information packaging: 0.5

Rose series, love with heart
- [a special green and lychee aroma] The opening rose, the special green and lychee aroma are like the heavy dew on the grass in the morning.
- [Unique packaging art] Along with the pressing, the scents of flowers are depicted according to their true state.
- [a big attraction] With the special aroma of lychee, you attract everyone’s attention.
Migrating Vs. Decentralizing MOOC-based e-content to Teaching MA Language and Communication Students

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Abstract
Never before has education been more tech-oriented, cloud-based, and online-driven, especially with this new pandemic-altered educational environment. However, new regulations worldwide limit physical interaction inside the bounds of educational institutions, which pushed Algerian university teachers to operate mainly online under unsuitable conditions. Therefore, our prime objective is to devise a MOOC-based teaching modal that primarily palliates the current dire problems regarding students’ equity. One of the solutions proposed in this paper is two equitable, to some extent, tech-enabled modalities of instruction that leverage the available first-rate Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) e-content to teach Master of Arts (MA) students: language and communication students of English department at Mostaganem University in Algeria. There were two online groups, the first one regards migrating to the MOOC itself and letting students operate on the MOOC provider. The second e-group decentralizes the e-content to a closed Facebook group where students can access the e-pedagogical materials directly from the social-media-mediated landscape. To this end, a pedagogical action research based on the comparative approach is used to undertake this study that comprehended 44 students to compare the two e-groups through different working situations. Findings revealed the difference between the two e-modes of teaching. They presented a framework enabling instructors to choose which one to leverage according to students’ digital skills and access to internet bandwidth, thus serving as a guideline for any instructor wishing to participate in such an educational endeavor. Finally, implications of these two technologized modes of instruction on the teaching profession overall are set forth.

Keywords: digital skills, MOOC e-content, social media, Algerian university teachers

Introduction

Framed upon the various consequential effects that the global outbreak dropped on different sectors, in general, and academia, in particular, teachers and educators delved into the process of looking for new educational avenues to e-teach their students. They were required to dig into home-only delivery pedagogy. By it, teacher- and/or institutions-led initiatives attempted to plot, devise and deploy e-instructional modalities to ensure educational continuity despite all the wide range of challenges they faced and are, in fact, still facing thus far, in particular during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

As a case in point, the Algerian ministry of higher education imposed Moodle as a common platform – that is neither well-adopted nor well-adapted to be leveraged by students and teachers (Ghounane, 2020 ; Sarnou & Sarnou, 2021) or alternative ones like Facebook, Zoom, Google classroom and so on (Chelghoum & Chelghoum, 2020 ; Ghobrini, 2020 ; Ghounane, 2021). They have fallen back to the de-multimediatized asynchronous e-mode of teaching (Lassoued et al., 2020). Students were overloaded with text-, pdf- or ppt-format above and beyond the absence of synchronous contact between these two actors (Blizak et al., 2020).

Algerian university instructors had to ache a heavy workload regarding the multi-layered teaching task that considered issues related to the pedagogical material creation, customized delivery, choice of to-be-used technology, e-environment adequacy and internet and tech-device access (Haddad, 2020 ; Asma & Asma, 2021). Therefore, our academic research focused on using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as an alternative and supportive model for free education worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, we have focused on the lack of using Massive Online Courses as one of the alternative and challenging forms of open education provided for free through online platforms in Algeria in all sectors, particularly the educational sector. By this, we will refer to the crucial role of MOOC in reducing various obstacles our students and teachers or colleagues faced during the shift of teaching and learning from face-to-face to online.

In this context, researchers attempted to mitigate some of the prominent issues, especially those regarding equity. They thus developed a MOOC-based initiative on social media, particularly Facebook. In addition to unburdening the loads of having to design new e-materials from scratch, this e-pathway can also empower e-instructors with a guideline that could help them overcome the existing and persisting issues. In this regard, we could develop two main research questions about Algerian university teachers’ ability to teach students with no internet access and students with limited to no digital skills. To go strictly to the points, we based the study upon the following objectives:

1. Develop a MOOC-based teaching modal that primarily palliates the current dire problems related to students' equity.
2. Deploy and refine two variants of the tailored MOOC-based e-initiative, namely "Decentralizing" and "Migrating."
3. Trace their execution and give a detailed account of their merits and demerits
4. Generate a guideline or a framework that can steer teachers’ teaching ship even when operating in minor favorable conditions.
Literature Review

Merging MOOCs with Social Media

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) witnessed an unprecedented proliferation in the educational realm (Ghemmour & Sarnou, 2016), that is why scholars, educators, and researchers became optimistically quite vocal about the potential impact it can yield for life-long learners anywhere in the world. However, due to the newness of MOOCs, different educational experts and scholars defined MOOCs differently. For example, Kesim and Altipuluk (2015) portray MOOCs as:

internet-based educational environments that provide the opportunity to take classes from elite universities and instructors through environments, such as videos and presentations through open and free courses and course schedules with no formal degrees, certification, or accreditation for the self-development of knowledge and competencies by individuals. (p.16)

According to them, students are offered the chance to learn and expand their knowledge virtually on educational platforms that draw content from prestigious universities with no formal accreditation whatsoever. As a result, not only students but teachers can also benefit from the broad spectrum of high-quality learning materials (Bicen, 2017, p.173; Mattes, 2017) that can be leveraged in their teaching trajectory, especially in this dicey period of Covid-19 juncture.

Through a more focused-lenses on MOOCs affordances, Ghobrini (2021) draws attention to the untapped benefit of offline-MOOC-based content, which means that “each available e-course is the related offline materials for it. That is to say that each video can be downloaded; even better, students can download the transcript of that very video” (p. 5). This feature of diversifying the format of the same material can be the first part of the puzzle related to the new e-mode of instruction this research seeks to devise; this is one of the many reasons MOOCs became popular amongst students of different socio-economic backgrounds. In the same vein, social media are gaining ground at an exponential rate in comparison with educational-only platforms due to the persistent interest of millennials and their constant presence in the virtual world (Yurder&Akdol, 2021).

From a stance that converges these two trends (social media and MOOC), a survey conducted by Bicen (2017) indicates that a significant number of students took part in an e-course hosted by the Near East University “would like to access to MOOCs programs through social media” (p. 175). In the same vein, he echoed that it is preferred to operate and view educational-based content on these socially-enabled platforms rather than educational only platforms. Along the same line of thought, Zheng, Han, Rosson, and Carroll's (2016) study demonstrates that social media - specifically Facebook- groups enhanced students' engagement (2016) than MOOC forums and retention. Likewise, Lucas and Moreira (2009) revealed that utilizing informal social network outlets positively impacts students' formal learning outcomes. Finally, an initial tentative to blend MOOCs with social media is portrayed in the study that was carried out by Ostashewski and Reid (2012) in which the e-course was delivered within a university social networking site group, and the “learning activities utilized social media tools for content delivery and student engagement” (p. 217). This socially-network teaching practice is referred to as the educationalization process of the social platform (Ghobrini, Benzert, &Balas,
or, more precisely, educationalizing features of it by “adding on an educational perspective whilst preserving the social characteristic and that is what sets this instructional mode apart from educational-only platforms” (p. 11). It entails a synergy of the educational and the social aspect that offers students a wide pallet of functionalities that ranges from posting, sharing, commenting, video-conferencing, sending text-based and voice-based messages to collaborating and cooperating (Das & Mahapatra, 2018). In a context-driven perspective, many Algerian studies have mined social media in general (Sahraoui & Chaibendraa, 2020; Sarnou, 2021; Ghobrini et al., 2022) and Facebook (Blizak et al., 2020; Ghounane, 2020; Ghounane, 2021) in particular for educational purposes, especially in these tumultuous times, but studies that blended MOOC and social media are significantly scarce, and this is the reason that motivated us to undertake this study on a MOOC-based initiative on social outlets.

Angled Lenses on Students’ Equity

Distance education does often equates with social equity (Willems, 2013) in terms of “access, participation, and outcomes across a broad spectrum of formal learning contexts” (Willems & Bossu, 2012, p.185). From a MOOC-guided stance, Inamorato dos Santos, Punie, and Scheller (2017) probe MOOCs and highlight their “potential means of achieving social inclusion and equal opportunities” (p. 6). In the same token, different scholarship tackled “students equity” from various aspects, which can refer to “widening participation” in higher education (Bennett, Southgate, & Shah, 2016), the underlying policies and strategies to do so (Burke, 2012), educational- and governmental-led initiatives alongside the funding affecting it (Naylor & James, 2016), the excluded social minorities like “prisoners, indigenous people, and immigrants from around the world” (Silver, 2010, p.183), marginalized racial groups (Bennett et al., 2016) disabled and aged learners (Sanchez-Gordon & Luján-Mora, 2018; Park, So & Cha, 2019), or more recently, socio-cultural, linguistic, and economic skill-based barriers (Lambert, 2020).

In our case, for the sake of clarity and analytic precision, “students equity” regards, on the one hand, the ability to access synchronously or asynchronously the same e-content for all students, even if it is not framed in the same format, and on the other hand, being able to access that very pedagogical material regardless of their internet bandwidth especially if it is non-existent. This predicament is often coined as the digital divide, which is “the absence or limitation of access to the Internet for certain people or groups based on affordability, knowledge, or motivation” (Adams, Ernstes & Lucey, 2015, p.641). As for the necessary e-skills, allow them to operate effectively and efficiently on a wide variety of web-based outlets, be it educational (e.g., MOOC providers) or social (e.g., Facebook).

Therefore, along with the same perspective of the four-fold ICT engagement principles mentioned by Dray, Lowenthal, Miszkiewicz, Ruiz-Primo and Marczynski (2011), basic technology skills and access to tech apparatus remains a priority when dealing with matters that seek to address students’ equity. For instructors to provide any help, they need a specific e-skills categorization to pinpoint students’ digital literacy better. Upon this reflection, Ghobrini (2021) gave an initial tentative categorization of students who struggled, partly or entirely, to get into the online landscape. He, therefore, contends that:
this category of non-digitally fluent students has gained, to a large extent, a new trait during the critical pandemic period of being partly-digitally-tethered as they are present on social media through a tech device, be it their own or one of their close relatives- as an attempt to acclimate to the new normal. (p.7)

A considerable variety of studies backed this claim that a significant increase of active social media users has been noticed during the lockdown both on the national (Kemp, 2020a; Social Media Stats Algeria, 2021) and international level (Bruns, Harrington, & Hurcombe, 2020; Kemp, 2020b; Tsao, Chen, Tisseverasinghe, Yang, Li & Butt, 2021; Volkmer, 2021). In this light, Kemp (2020b) asserts that a total increase of more than 10.5% of social media users was observed during the period of the first lockdown, which amounts to more than 376 million users worldwide, and 99% of these very users accessed their social media accounts via mobile phones. From a local context-bound context, 80% of the Algerian population was on Facebook in the first lockdown caused by the global pandemic (Social Media Stats Algeria, 2021), and this hints at the fact that Algerians in general and youth, in particular, are fond of and inclined to this social-media medium of communication. Another fact worth mentioning is that the dominant communication provider (Djezzy) in Algeria offers a free service called “Djezzy Flex” that enables Facebook users to operate with text-only features like viewing and sending text messages. However, it does not allow videos or picture viewing (Facebook Flex, 2021). In conjunction with the first piece of the puzzle related to offline MOOC-based attributes discussed above, this feature holds the potential of addressing the second part of the problem regarding student equity. Hence, it will be the second piece of the puzzle that substantiates, to a large extent, the e-solution that this study attempts to elaborate.

Methods

The undertaken study is a pedagogical action research with an aspect of a comparative approach to develop and compare two MOOC-based instructional modes to e-teach students during the second wave of the global COVID-19 pandemic and, in all likelihood, generate practical guidelines for tertiary level teachers to be able to leverage in this abruptly metamorphosed educational conditions. The fundamental purpose of pedagogical action research is to systematically investigate our own teaching-learning facilitation practice with the dual aim of modifying practice and contributing to theoretical knowledge (Norton, 2018).

The researchers were required to reflect and recalibrate their instruction to suit the current conditions through an iterative process of planning, acting, observing, collecting feedback, and reflecting until attaining a favorable outcome. It would, hence, enrich the existing body of literature in this niche as well as serve educational practitioners worldwide generally and low-to-intermediate income countries specifically. Along these lines, Kemmis (2009) argues that action research is regarded as a “practice-based practice” which goes hand in hand with what was intended from this study as the main aim is to develop and devise through two variants equitable, to varying degrees, of MOOC-based modes of instruction that tentatively oust the prominent barriers that obstructed the learning-teaching dive in this turbulent time.

Context and Participants

The research is conducted at the University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis, in the department of English language, with 44 first-year master students of the language and communication
discipline, aged between 20 and 26 years old (52% males and 47% females) primarily took part in the study and were randomly assigned to two different Facebook groups through an online website, “randomlists.com.” However, there is no experimental control group. It was merely done to augment the validity of the research. Students who did not complete or dropped out of the course were removed from both groups leaving 19 students in each one. The sampling technique used in the study is convenience sampling since students were not randomly selected and thus have been all included in it as this technique “constitutes a non-random (non-probability) sampling” (Sedgwick, 2013, p.1).

Research Instruments
This action-research process was undertaken using three different data collection tools: post and pre-questionnaire, online and offline observation, and students' continuous feedback. These qualitative and quantitative data were gathered at different stages of the study. First, the pre-questionnaire was administered to the target population to gauge students' needs and fixate the first pillars of the context-informed problems. Then, at a later stage, build upon it an adequate theory- and terrain grounded panacea that is likely to yield a successful learning-teaching endeavor. Finally, the implementation of this quite novel instructional approach data was gathered through two channels: face-to-face class observation and online observation in the Facebook private group alongside the continuous students' feedback to draw a detailed portrait of the students' learning experience and thus re-calibrate instruction. Finally, after completing the course, the post questionnaire is administered to capture, holistically, how students have experienced this learning venture and, in the same token, delineate both the positive and negative aspects of these MOOC-enabled instructional modes and how we can re-adjust them for future usage.

Research Procedures
All students of the same class had the same face-to-face instruction, but once online, students are separated into two different private Facebook groups -considered an online class. To avoid random posts, each week's posts, be they assignment, announcement or documents, were grouped in a guide - a new feature of Facebook's social learning that allows the administrator of the group to “organize posts into guides and change the order in which they appear” (social learning group) so that students can have a structured and organized view of the posts once they log in to access the e-group. For example, the first post in each group was a screen-recorded video illustrating how to create an account to access the MOOC provider “Coursera”, which online course to enroll in and how to do it.

Because this platform has a monetized system of their courses but, at the same time, offers an audit-free version to anyone who cannot pay and wishes to take part in these courses, it was necessary to give students a simple step-by-step procedure on how to do it. For this reason, students were required to access Coursera as “auditors”- users who view the content but do not complete any assessment (Coffrin, Corrin, Barba, & Kennedy, 2014). For them to access the e-content without paying any fee entrance as opposed to another type of “the active” learners who completed at least one assessment; or “qualified” learners who watched content, completed the assessment, and scored well.
It is noteworthy that it was mandatory for the first group (migrating) to create an account on Coursera. After all, it was the only way they could have gotten access to the video-based e-materials instead of the second group (decentralizing), which was optional because the e-content was already posted on the group. Students had three minor assignments and a major one that encompasses what they have learnt throughout this contracted period of time. For their assignment to come to fruition, students need to view the MOOC-based pedagogical material as it was the core of the course.

**Results and Discussion**

The researchers designed a MOOC-based instructional mode to acclimate to the new normal. They managed to deploy two variants, namely “decentralizing” and “migrating,” mainly differentiated regarding how students access the MOOC-format pedagogical materials. Overall, with a problem-solving mindset, the e-solution is based upon three prongs: 1. alternative e-space, 2. multimedia-based content, 3. a sense of equity. These three prominent elements are alternative avenues that seek to address the currently existing challenges that we are confronted with in our context. The result is exhibited herein and related to the state-of-the-art literature to situate our study in worldwide scholarly discourse.

**Facebook as an Alternative E-space**

Due to the myriad problems encountered with Moodle platform, Facebook was primarily chosen by students initially in a class by a show of hands and confirmed later on in the pre-questionnaire, 64,75% of the participants overall chose Facebook as an adequate alternative e-space for them, of course, others opted for other socially-mediated platforms in which they were familiar. Nevertheless, equally important, even those who did not rate Facebook in the first position had an account and could thereupon operate comfortably on it.

A minority (27,2%) opted for Moodle as they became accustomed to the platform. In that sense, students argue that on Facebook, it is easier to “contact teachers and friends”[they mean classmates], “access,” “get notified on time”[as opposed to Moodle where the user need to log in and see the notifications], and “interact will all at once.” Others are prone to the high degree of familiarity with the app-based platform and that “it extends the classroom in new and interesting ways and encourages collaboration and communication amongst groups of all sizes.” This choice was not new, as 73,7% of the respondents certified that they had previously collaborated on Facebook even during the initial lockdown. These claims are reinforced by Ghounane (2020, 2021), as she argues that Facebook was the refuge that sheltered Algerian university learners and their teachers in the unpredictable times of Covid-19. From other lenses, Ghobrini, Benzert, and Balas (2022) certify that this educational-driven utilization of the platform entails that this in-the-cloud outlet was educationalized in that some features –that were inherently devised for social purposes – were maximized for educational ones.

**Multimediatizing Content**

Multimediatizing content in this study was of eminent prominence as 86,8% of students attested that most of all the e-material they have dealt with during the lockdown period was text-based, 13,2% noted that it was in a PowerPoint format. A slight minority declared that a handful of teachers posted on the university platform YouTube video(s) that are not always from reliable sources since YouTube is not an only-educational-video provider as opposed to MOOC
providers. Participants asserted that these types of content, which are primarily text-based, were “boring and time-consuming,” “too long with very complex formal language” and “ambiguous”. Therefore, they were qualified as a very “passive way of learning” which, ultimately led to “boredom” and “lack of motivation” and even worse, as one student confessed that he dropped out of university and that this traditional type of instruction was a slight, but the reason for making this drastic decision. Naturally, upon analyzing a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree that was utilized to gauche students' perceptions toward MOOC-based content, the lion share of the participants, from “agree to strongly agree”, in group one (84%), and 83% in group two, affirm that they prefer video-based content instead of text-based ones which corroborated by the huge body of literature (Alario-Hoyos, Estévez-Ayres, Gallego-Romero, Delgado-Kloos, Fernández-Panadero, Crespo-García, & Blasco-Alís, 2018; Liang & Chalermnirundorn, 2020) that attests it considerably improves their motivation, regulate their cognitive load (Schneider et al., 2018) self-pace their instruction (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006) and to the mere fact that a great portion of their life is spent in e-world full of highly and graphically sophisticated 3D videos, images and pictures, so it is only fitting to use these type of multimediatized material to better engage them in the learning-teaching process.

Even more so, each video, be it decentralized in the Facebook group or presented on Coursera, is supplied with English subtitles to grab students' attention and foster their understanding of the content(Osman, 2020). From another perspective, one student, unexpectedly, professed that she does not like the instructor in the video, which can be an influential factor to consider when curating such multimodal content and hence give students an extra-layer of agency by including their voice in the choice of the content.

A Sense of Equity

Of chief importance was to see that the newly designed alternative instructional modality has an aspect of inclusivity that showcases a degree, though limited, of equity of having access to one common platform, namely Facebook, and offering them different formats of the same materials. Otherwise stated, catering an equitable environment according to students’ different digital skills ranges from being partly digitally literate to digitally-literate and digitally fluent (Savin-Baden, 2015; Falconer, 2019; Çelik&Kokoc, 2020; Ghobrini, 2021). Furthermore, in tandem with considering students' e-skills, the proposed model of instruction took into heed the internet problems they are facing as 72,2% in group one and 57,9% in group two of the participants assert that they had some internet-related issues. However, all of them attested that, in general, there is a local shortage in high internet quality. That is why 69,2% in group one and 60% in group two of the target population were affected by this technical issue and therefore used some form of pdf and/or text-based format of the videos. More specifically, 91,7% in Group one and 40% in group two opted for the pdf version of the content because students declare that “pdf version doesn't require a high-quality internet bandwidth” and that they “prefer to read slowly” and in other instances, they “watch videos and read the pdf from Coursera to better comprehend” the content at hand. As for the rest of them, they had to work with the text-based format of the content because they argued that they did not “have internet on their phone,” “didn't want to consume much of internet” and, says another one “I could read all the transcript posted in the comment section with having only free Facebook.” Diversifying the content typology appeared to suit the marginalized students' needs and learning styles overall. This finding is in line with that of Sankey, Birch and Gardiner's (2011) which measured the impact of
multiple content representations on learning outcomes and thus report that their students were very satisfied “on their use of the multimodal learning elements and perceived that these had assisted comprehension and retention of the material” (p. 18).

After planning and executing the two MOOC-based instructional modes, a detailed account is given on how to utilize them and the main differences that set them apart alongside their pearls and pitfalls. To maximize its use, the researchers devised a Framework for equity (Figure one) that leverages these two tech-driven modes of instruction. This framework can serve as a guideline for any instructor, educator, stakeholder, or decision-maker that faces equity-related problems in e-teaching and thus desires to alleviate such barriers.

**Migrating Vs Decentralizing**

Upon the three prongs mentioned above, a clear delineation is echoed below to distinguish the “Migrating” mode from the “decentralizing” one. On the one end of the pendulum, “Decentralizing” was the mode of e-instruction where students had to operate solely in the e-group because all the MOOC-based content were either downloaded from the MOOC provider or subsequently uploaded to the online group or a link to the target content is directly posted in the e-group. The former is a tad burdensome for the instructor as it is time-consuming. However, the second is more practical as the teacher chooses the MOOC-based material, copying and pasting the link within the Facebook closed group. On the other end of the pendulum, “Migrating” indicates that students are to migrate to the MOOC provider and operate on it in order for students to access the MOOC-based material. In other words, students will see a post on the e-group instructing them precisely which content to look for, how to locate it, and, afterward, complete the assignment. Any video-based content posted on either group is always accompanied by the corresponding pdf-format docs (shared through a google drive link) to be easily accessed for those who have internet issues. For the minority, who do not have internet, transcripts of the videos are posted in the post's comment section so that they can view, at least, the text-based content of the material at hand.

**Pearls and Pitfalls**

This section maps out the pearls and pitfalls of the two MOOC-based instructional modalities. As far as the “decentralizing” mode is concerned, the first positive aspect lies in the fact that students are well-acquainted with the platform where MOOC-based content is decentralized, in this case, Facebook. On that account, students will not have any technical problems, and that is why most of the questions that students inquired about, in this modality of instruction, was content-related, i.e., students asked the instructors questions related to the content, which enabled them to receive customized feedback to better fathom the course material, unlike students in group one, in the “Migrating” mode, where most of the inquiries were technical-related. For example, 47.1% of them have never operated on it before. Others could not log in properly, and 50% of the participants found difficulty locating the assigned videos or even accessing the audit version of the MOOC - the free version as it was previously explained. These challenges reflect that the lack of some students' digital skills which can make this mode demanding for both the instructor and the students as it derails their attention from the learning process, which, in turn, can be demotivating. On the flip side of the coin, digitally literate to fluent students, who could access the MOOC platforms, can benefit, in addition to the
assigned content, from new e-doorways of knowledge that can potentially expand their horizons as it offers e-courses in domains other than their own.

**Framework and its Implications**

The fruit of our study is translated in this MOOC-based framework that answers the research questions and confirms the ability of e-teachers, to some extent, to e-teach their students regardless of the internet bandwidth flux and students’ digital skills. The first addition that the framework brings forth is an extended categorization of students’ digital skills that take the e-transformation that students went through during the Covis-19 pandemic into consideration and therefore is better suited to represent students in that same context. This classification stems predominantly from the work of Çelik and Kokoç (2020) with only three categories, namely no digital skills, digitally literate and digitally fluent and, compiling them secondarily with Ghobrini’s (2021) new category termed “partly-digitally-tethered” that is labeled in Figure one as partly digitally literate, which points out to the minority who were forced to seek refuge in the social-media realm with “a tech-device, be it their own or one of their close relatives- as an attempt to acclimate to the new normal.” (p. 7). It entails that this marginalized category of students has a basic savoir-faire that enables them to navigate the social media landscape. In tandem with this extended categorization, Figure one depicts how instructors, educators, and even policymakers can deploy a “Centralized” or “Migrating” tech-enabled teaching mode according to the students’ digital skills and their accessibility to internet bandwidth because these are the two significant challenges that teachers are constantly faced with, most particularly, in middle-to-low income countries. To illustrate the use of the framework, supposing that the instructor is dealing with partly digitally literate students who have a somewhat limited internet bandwidth. Then, upon frame-based reasoning, the instructor had better opt for a decentralized (D in Figure one) modality of instruction to optimize and maximize the learning-teaching process while taking advantage of all the aspects presented in the three-part e-pathway developed in the study. That is, every change in these parameters leads to a scenario that has a “centralized” or “migrating” technology-based online teaching method that adequately corresponds to the setting in which the instructor operates. It, conjointly, implies that the instructor can leverage a mix of the two modes if he has students with a different range of digital skillset. What should be kept in mind is that the choice depends merely on the context-related specifications of the teacher.

![Figure 1. Framework of integrating a “centralized” or “Migrating” teaching mode according to the students’ digital skills and their accessibility to internet bandwidth](image-url)
Educators and teachers nationwide, especially those from intermediate-to-low countries where equity problems are most exhibited, need such tech-enabled and equitable modes of instruction. They unburden instructors from designing the e-content from scratch and help them overcome such hardships. On top of all, these instructors will have a framework that will help them re-adjust their e-practices according to their operating situation.

Conclusion

With the abrupt onset of the covid-19 outbreak, e-instructional challenges have grown multi-fold. Accordingly, teachers and educators nationwide have strained themselves to look forward and beyond to find e-solutions to assist them in navigating the hurdles of emergency remote teaching, especially those related to equity. That is why this study’s main objective was to devise technology-enabled modes of teaching that overcome such barriers. In this light, the proposed two MOOC-based teaching modalities offer tutors the possibility of overcoming persisting issues related to students' digital skills and access to internet bandwidth. They empower instructors with alternative avenues that can afford well-rounded and well-balanced teaching-learning experiences like operating on social-media-oriented e-spaces and multimediatizing content. Coupled with these affordances, these two MOOC-based e-modes of instruction are supplied with a framework that can serve as a guideline for researchers, educators, educational institutions instructors, and stakeholders to choose the suitable model according to two parameters as mentioned earlier, even in the minor pleasant conditions like the total absence of internet bandwidth. This scholarly discourse can present a baseline for future research and enrich the escalating body of literature in this niche of modern e-pedagogy.

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Migrating Vs. Decentralizing MOOC-based e-content to Teaching


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Educators’ Attitudes toward Teaching Western Literature to Saudi University Students

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Abstract
Numerous studies have investigated the issue of teaching in EFL classrooms and the relationship between educators and students; some focus on the pedagogy used to teach English, while others center on students’ attitudes. This study fills an existing gap in the literature on educators’ attitudes toward teaching Western literature in non-Western settings. It surveys educators’ backgrounds and perspectives toward teaching Western cultural, social, and religious issues in Saudi Arabia and identifies which variables influence their attitudes toward teaching Western literature. It examines educators’ goals in teaching Western literature within the Saudi context, in line with the progressive Vision 2030 and the ongoing process of globalization. It investigates the present state of teaching Western literature in the English departments of eight Saudi universities through a mixed-methods approach, analyzing data from a questionnaire completed by 99 educators. This study highlights the significance of teaching Western literary texts in Saudi bachelor (BA) teaching programs. The results yield some valuable pedagogical implications on what Western literature can offer English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students in Saudi universities. They demonstrate the educators’ positive attitudes toward teaching Western literature in EFL classrooms, believing that it can achieve objectives that transcend the boundaries of language and text. These findings are rewarding in a broader sense and particularly so in this globalized era. Accordingly, this study recommends the teaching of Western literature as a means of bridging the East/West divide, a matter of increasing significance in the current era.

Keywords: EFL classrooms, Saudi Arabia, educators’ attitudes, Western literature

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Introduction

English functions as the global language of communication due to the number of people who use it as a first or second language and its widespread use in different contexts. It is the primary language of instruction for sciences such as medicine, engineering, and modern technology.

The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has long recognized the importance of teaching English as a foreign language, but attention to English language proficiency has increased in step with the country’s development. This process depends on continuous interaction with the outside world. English language education in Saudi Arabia dates back nearly ninety years, beginning in 1927. However, the importance of learning the English language is ever-increasing, and mastery of the language by Saudi students is one of the priorities of the Saudi educational system, attracting significant financial support. Initially, students learned English at intermediate, secondary, and university levels. However, it has recently been introduced for students in the first years of elementary school.

At the university level, English instruction is no longer simply instrumental; its scope has widened to include interests in the English language and in English and American literature. Universities teach foreign literature in the faculties of arts and humanities. Some of these faculties are interested in English literature, others in French literature, and some have gone beyond this to teach European and world literature. However, the prevailing trend is to concentrate on the interest in English literature.

Many studies have investigated teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, mainly discussing its problems and obstacles. However, there has been little research into educators’ attitudes toward teaching Western literature in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classrooms within an oriental setting, particularly within Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the author has taken the initiative of conducting this study to identify and characterize educators’ attitudes toward teaching Western literature in Saudi universities’ EFL classrooms and their goals when teaching during the Vision 2030 era. This work highlights the significance of teaching Western literary texts in Saudi bachelor degree (BA) programs. This study has three main objectives. The first is to determine how educators’ personal and professional backgrounds affect their attitudes toward teaching Western literature to Saudi students. The second is to evaluate educators’ attitudes toward how Western literature is taught in the English departments of eight selected universities in Saudi Arabia. Finally, this study highlights educators’ goals in teaching Western literature in the contemporary Saudi context. Thus, to identify and characterize educators’ attitudes toward teaching Western literature in Saudi universities’ EFL classrooms during the Vision 2030 era, as well as their goals when teaching, the author formulated the following research questions:

1. Do educators’ personal and professional backgrounds affect their attitudes toward teaching Western literature in a Saudi environment?
2. Do educators believe that teaching Western literature to EFL students in Saudi Arabia is conducive to enhancing language acquisition and improving students’ linguistic, cultural, and personal awareness?
3. What are educators’ goals in teaching Western literature in the Saudi context, both under the framework of Vision 2030 and in the new era of globalization more generally?

Literature Review

Since the 1980s, EFL educators worldwide have become interested in the debate surrounding teaching literature in EFL contexts (Clandfield & Duncan, 2004). The use of literature as a tool in EFL pedagogy has produced numerous, sometimes controversial studies on the practice. Some researchers highlight the benefits of teaching literature to EFL students; McKay (1982), for instance, claims that it fosters students’ reading skills, promotes tolerance, and helps students become creative. McRae (1991) similarly argues that literature motivates students toward personal and dynamic learning. EFL educators interested in literature have typically used it in line with the three models—cultural, language, and
personal growth—proposed by Carter and Long (1991). The cultural model views the literary text as a product, treating it not only as a source of academic information about the target language but also as a means to learn about a country’s culture and ideologies. In contrast, the language model is learner-centered and focuses primarily on how language is used. Brumfit and Carter (1986) highlight the role of literature as “an ally of language” as it exposes students to authentic language, whether slang or formal (1). Through their consumption of literature, students encounter and master new meanings while enhancing their general awareness of English grammar, vocabulary, and figures of speech. Many studies like those of Collie and Slater (1990) and Benton and Fox (1985) examine how teaching literature in EFL classrooms motivates students and enhances their learning, particularly in reading and writing—critical skills for language acquisition. Finally, the personal growth model attempts to create a link between the cultural and language models. It focuses on the language of texts while also stimulating students to think about different cultures compared to their own. Many studies seem to suggest that studying literature not only expands students’ cultural and linguistic awareness but also helps students to construct their personalities by encouraging interaction and discussion. Raithby and Taylor (2020) explain this as follows:

Through the development of intercultural skills, the reader is invited to adopt a different perspective on the familiar and be receptive to the unfamiliar. Seeing through the eyes of multiple protagonists encourages empathy for different viewpoints [...]. Encouragements to relate the experiences of fictional characters to their own contexts and emotions may also promote greater self-awareness and reflexivity (p. 20).

Clarifying this idea, Bobkina and Dominguez (2014) claim that “students usually get engaged in the plot of the story, commonly feeling close to their favorite characters” and suggest that motivating this form of engagement “creates a positive general effect on the learning process which is at the same time positive for the particular process of language acquisition” (p. 250). This supports the belief that using literature in EFL classrooms can help students to gain intercultural awareness. Doing so enables students “to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space and to come to perceive tradition of thought and feeling and artistic form in those cultures” (Carter & Long, 1991, p. 2). Many studies, such as Parkinson and Thomas’s (2000), argue that teaching literature to EFL students can instill cultural knowledge.

Moreover, in a recent study, Khan and Alasmari (2018) highlight “the prospective advantages of using literary text in EFL classrooms” on students’ overall learning experience (p. 174). Their study highlights a “comprehensive literature on the benefits of using literary text in EFL classrooms, emphasizing the notion that it promotes authentic materials, helps increase language skills, and extends linguistic knowledge” (p. 167).

While several studies affirm the need for employing literature in EFL classrooms, many others have been critical of the idea that it offers linguistic or cultural benefits (see Spack, 1985; McKay, 2001; Hall, 2003; Lima, 2005). These studies describe the difficulties posed by literary language, arguing that it is irrelevant to the process of learning a foreign language. Hall (2003) argues that teaching literature is not always meaningful for learners despite the enthusiasm it might stir in classrooms. Lima (2005) goes further, stating that the mastery of grammatical forms and graded structures that usually guide EFL teaching “clashes violently with the intentional bending and breaking of grammatical rules that seems to be one of the main features of literature” (p. 186). Consequently, structural linguists argue that literature “should be excluded from the ESL curriculum because of its structural complexity, lack of conformity to standard grammatical rules and remote cultural perspectives” (Spack, 1985, p. 704).
In addition to linguistic disputes, scholars have debated cultural concepts surrounding the teaching of literary texts in EFL classrooms to assess whether “any benefits can arise from examining the cultural assumption of a piece of literature” (McKay, 2001, p. 531). According to McKay (2001), “literature may work to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and the student [and it] may increase their understanding of that culture and perhaps spur their own creation of imaginative works” (p. 531). McKay appears to suggest that using literature in EFL classrooms might indeed yield some rewards. Accordingly, literature in EFL classrooms is an internationally controversial issue, generating many sharply conflicting views on this pedagogical approach.

In line with the findings of the majority of the research studies noted above, this study more closely aligns itself with the positive perspective toward using literature in EFL classrooms, agreeing that it helps learners’ development linguistically, culturally, and personally. However, the discussion should also focus on EFL educators’ attitudes and goals when using Western literature with Saudi students in the period shaped by Vision 2030. Although there have been many studies of EFL teaching in non-Western contexts, little research has considered the teaching of Western literature in Saudi universities. Moskovsky and Picard (2019) have, however, worked to provide a comprehensive review of almost 25 years of academic research into issues relating to EFL teaching and learning in Saudi classrooms. The book presents itself as providing a historical “overview of English and English teaching in Saudi Arabia, including its early ‘Golden Age,’ its virtual disappearance during the ‘Wahhabi Period,’ and its reintroduction and expansion from the ‘Unification’ period to the present.” Generally speaking, it “is concerned with attitudes to English teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia.” In addition, it reflects “issues relating to in-country EFL learning/learners in Saudi Arabia” (pp. 2–3). The book, therefore, does touch upon the EFL learning environment within the Saudi educational system, both historical and present, and highlights the future of English as a foreign language in the country. Despite this, however, it does not give sufficient attention to the teaching of Western literature in Saudi EFL classrooms. Recent studies that address this issue (see Alshammari et al., 2020) tend to center on the challenges faced by educators and students rather than educators’ attitudes. Such work typically investigates the reasons—as perceived by educators and instructors—why EFL students might be discouraged from studying English literature. Some recent research has also considered students’ attitudes toward using authentic literary material, but this has not included consideration of educators’ attitudes (see Hussein & Al-Emami, 2016).

Hence, the author undertook this study to fill the gap in the existing literature on educators’ attitudes toward teaching Western literature to Saudi EFL students, particularly within the context of Vision 2030. It examines whether educators’ personal and professional backgrounds influence their approaches to teaching Western literature in Saudi Arabia, while also acknowledging the uniquely conservative environment of non-Western students. Thus, this study gathered information on educators’ backgrounds—such as age and personal and professional experiences—and their attitudes toward teaching Western literature, incorporating cultural, social, and religious issues; this served to identify which variables currently influence educators’ attitudes. It then builds on this foundation to examine and reformulate Saudi EFL educators’ goals when teaching Western literature within the context of the new Saudi Vision 2030. To achieve this, the author asked faculty members from English departments in eight of Saudi Arabia’s leading universities to complete a questionnaire and then analyzed their responses.

Method

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, using SurveyMonkey to distribute a questionnaire online to collect initial data for analysis. This 40-item questionnaire asked educators about their attitudes toward teaching Western literature in Saudi university EFL classrooms. The study also incorporated a qualitative element that drew mainly on responses to open-ended questionnaire items, for which educators provided further explanations of their attitudes and practices.
Participants

The 99 participants in this study all educators teaching Western literature within their respective departments. Of those participants, 7 were teaching assistants, 20 were lecturers, 53 were assistant professors, 14 were associate professors, and 5 were professors. The age of the participants ranged from 22 to 61+, with the majority falling within the brackets of 31–40 (41%) and 41–50 (38%), with the remaining 20% spread across the age brackets 22–30, 51–60, and 61+. The majority of the respondents identified as female (72%) and 27% as male. More questionnaires were completed by educators from Taif University than from any remaining university, due in part to the author’s affiliation with that institution.

Instruments

The questionnaire comprised 40 questions, categorized into 11 different themes:

1. Personal information (Q1 to Q7)
2. Professional experience (Q8 to Q14)
3. Attitudes toward teaching Western literature (Q15 to Q17)
4. Attitudes toward literary genres (Q18 and Q19)
5. Attitudes toward course material (Q20 and Q21)
6. Attitudes toward taboo and erotic images/scenes (Q22 to Q27)
7. Attitudes toward literary texts (Q28 to Q32)
8. Attitudes toward the department’s objective/s when using literary texts (Q33 to Q35)
9. Personal judgment as an educator (Q36 to Q38)
10. Understanding the perspectives of students while teaching Western literature (Q39, consisting of nine statements evaluated on a five-point Likert scale)
11. Factors affecting Western literature teaching in accordance with the Vision 2030 framework (Q40, consisting of six statements evaluated on a five-point Likert scale)

The Likert scale used in Q39 and Q40 ranged from 1 (“strongly agree”) to 5 (“strongly disagree”).

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the SurveyMonkey questionnaire was then analyzed using chi-square and Mann–Whitney U tests performed with R Project software. The descriptive statistics helped develop answers to the study’s primary research questions.

Setting

The author carried out this study during the 2020 academic year in the English departments of Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Jeddah University, King Abdulaziz University, King Saud University, Taif University, Umm Al-Qura University, and the University of Princess Nora. In those departments, students in their third and fourth years of EFL undergraduate study were required to take literature courses. Educators teach a broad historical range of prose fiction, drama, poetry, and literary criticism.

Findings

The goal of this study was to investigate educators’ attitudes toward the use of Western literature within the EFL classrooms of Saudi universities; as such, the survey considered a range of factors that may influence educators’ attitudes, including age, work experience, and personal background. The findings about these attitudes is presented below to demonstrate the results of the data analysis.

Do educators’ personal and professional backgrounds affect their attitudes toward teaching Western literature in the Saudi environment?

To address this first research question—whether educators’ personal and professional background impacts upon their attitude toward teaching Western literature within the Saudi context— the author analyzed educators’ responses to Questions 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10 (see Appendix A). What was immediately apparent is that most respondents had either spent time living in Western countries, had extensive
experience teaching Western literature, or both. However, exploring the impact of this experience on educators’ perspectives on teaching Western literature provided some surprising results. The responses to Q4 (‘Have you lived in the West?’) and Q10 (‘How knowledgeable are you regarding Western culture?’) show this clearly. The responses suggest no evident, strong correlation between educators having lived in the West and feeling that they are exceptionally knowledgeable about Western culture. This result was confirmed, and its significance tested, using a chi-squared test with the following hypotheses:

H0: Living in the West does not affect how knowledgeable educators about Western culture.

H1: Living in the West affects how knowledgeable educators about Western culture.

The resulting p-value of 0.0549 does not meet the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted: Living in the West does not affect how much educators know about Western culture.

Moreover, the author calculated the mean values for the answers given to the Likert items from Question 39 and compared them to the respondents’ years of experience (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1–5 Years</th>
<th>6–15 Years</th>
<th>16–25 Years</th>
<th>26–35 Years</th>
<th>36+ Years</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel teaching Western (English/American) literature makes me a better/more competent educator than others.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. From my English literature classes, I feel that students believe Western culture (English or American) is better than other cultures.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I think students tend to learn Western literature to understand the Western culture and promote Islam.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The students feel that learning Western literature means they are educated, open-minded people.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The students sometimes worry about losing their identity and Islamic culture in Western (English/American) literature classes.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The students find learning the culture of others is fun and exciting.</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The students think learning Western literary texts is a waste of time because they believe they are irrelevant to their course.</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The students think learning Western literature will improve their language skills.</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from Question 39 suggest that the amount of work experience each educator had did significantly influence their perception of the impact that teaching Western literature had on their careers. Hence, they have become more inclined to recognize the benefits of teaching Western literature to Saudi students. The responses to Statement 1, for example, indicate a gradual loss of humility, as with an increase in age and work experience, educators were more likely to believe that their instruction made them better or more intelligent than others. This may be partly attributable to generational differences in the perception of the West in Saudi Arabia and a lack of attachment to national identity among younger educators; they do not necessarily attach positive or negative values to Western culture, at least relative to their own, as the responses to Statement 2 indicate. Similarly, older and more experienced educators are
more inclined, in comparison to younger colleagues, to report that they thought that students learned Western literature and culture to promote Islam and Islamic culture (Statement 3). Again, this could be partly attributed to a stronger sense of national pride or belonging among older generations than younger ones raised in an increasingly globalized environment. Nonetheless, the weighted average response to this statement indicates that educators tend to remain ambivalent on this matter. Further, educators agreed that the teaching of Western literature in Saudi universities did not represent a threat to Islamic culture (Statement 5), this notion sharpening with an increase in work experience.

Moreover, older and more experienced educators tended to agree that studying Western literature meant that students felt educated and open-minded, while younger colleagues were ambivalent (Statement 4). Again, the role of globalization is significant here. The results also suggest that less-experienced, younger educators were more likely to have been raised in a more open society and accordingly were less ready to position one culture over another, thus blurring the distinctions between East and West. Educators also believed that students share a common interest in learning about other cultures (Statement 6) and in using Western literature as a tool of language acquisition (Statement 8). In general, as educators become more experienced, they tend to believe less and less that students view learning Western literature as a waste of time (Statement 7).

Question 40 measured the educators’ capabilities rather than their perceptions of Islamic and Western culture. The findings in Table 2 demonstrate a broader consensus among age and experience groups that educators’ skills and experience (Statement 3), attitudes (Statement 4), and their self-efficacy (Statement 5) strongly affect students’ learning experiences and motivation. All felt they were sufficiently knowledgeable to teach Western literature in a manner that could attract students and help them learn more about Western cultures. Table 2 also gives the mean Likert values for respondents from each age category.

Table 2. Factors Affecting the Teaching of English Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1–5 Years</th>
<th>6–15 Years</th>
<th>16–25 Years</th>
<th>26–35 Years</th>
<th>36+ Years</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Western literature classes in Saudi universities suffer from a sheer lack of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Educators face severe issues with students’ aptitude, initial preparedness, and motivation in courses related to Western literature.</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Educators’ skills and expertise, which include language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, learner-focused teaching, and professionalism, affect their teaching Western literature.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Educators with a positive attitudes toward teaching Western literature usually strive for better performances.</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The educators’ self-efficacy considerably influences instructional practices and classroom behavior, and on students’ achievement and motivation.</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Statement 1, the weighted average suggests overall that there is mild disagreement with the idea of a problematic lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It seems that those educators with 1–5 years of experience and those with 36+ years of experience tended to disagree most strongly with the statement (i.e., they were the ones most convinced there was no intrinsic/extrinsic lack of motivation). Except for
those educators with 26–35 years of experience (who did slightly agree with the statement), all the other
groups on average disagreed but to a somewhat lesser degree (and the group with 16–25 years of
experience more so than the group with 6–15 years of experience).

For Statement 2, the weighted average suggests a slight overall tendency amongst the respondents
disagree with what was said (2.58 is more significant than 2.50). Again, groups with 1–5 and 36+ years
of experience were the groups that, on average, most vigorously disagreed (with the 1–5 years of
experience cohort marginally stronger in their dispute). Once more, only one group —the group with 16–
25 years of experience (2.14)—displayed a degree of general agreement. It appears that educators at the
start (the first 15 years) and later stages (26+ years) of their careers typically feel as though they do not
face severe issues with students’ aptitude and motivation, whereas those in the middle of their careers
(broadly speaking, those with 16–25 years of experience) tend to believe that there are indeed issues in
that regard.

For Statements 3, 4, and 5, there is a general tendency to agree with the claim that educators’
skills and expertise affect their way of teaching Western literature, regardless of experience. This
indicates that educators of all levels of experience consider their professional skills to have a positive
impact on the way they teach. They believe they are sufficiently knowledgeable to teach Western
literature in a manner that can both attract students and impart knowledge of Western cultures. Finally,
regardless of their level of experience, respondents tended to agree that educators’ self-efficacy is
essential to improve classroom behavior and students’ motivation.

Do educators believe that teaching Western literature to EFL students in Saudi Arabia is conducive to
enhancing language acquisition and improving students’ level of linguistic, cultural, and personal
awareness?

The findings that address this second research question are relatively consistent with several
earlier studies that claim the use of literature in EFL classrooms has a positive impact (see Benton & Fox,
1985; Sage, 1987; Collie & Slater, 1990; Carter & Long, 1991; Bobkina & Elena, 2014). The responses to
Questions 12, 13, and 14 demonstrate that the majority of the respondents have a positive attitude toward
teaching Western literature to EFL students in Saudi Arabia regarding linguistic, cultural, and personal
outcomes, respectively, as demonstrated in Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you rate the effect of an academic course, such as the novel, on students’ linguistic outcomes?</th>
<th>How would you rate the effect of an academic course, such as the novel, on students’ cultural awareness outcomes?</th>
<th>How would you rate the effect of an academic course, such as the novel, on students’ personal growth?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of these three questions was both to evaluate respondents’ attitudes toward using literary
texts like novels as a method of teaching from different perspectives and to see which outcome educators
deemed to be more critical. Most respondents rated the use of literary texts to impact students’ learning
outcomes as “Very good” or “Good,” with very similar responses to Questions 13 and 14 (see Figure 1).
The author used a Mann–Whitney U test to check whether a literary text had the same effect on students’ cultural awareness and personal growth according to the educators, using the following hypotheses:

\( H_0: \) According to the educators’ responses, a literary text, such as a novel, has the same effect on the cultural awareness outcome and the personal growth of students.

\( H_1: \) According to the educators’ responses, a literary text, such as a novel, does not have the same effect on the cultural awareness outcome and the personal growth of students.

The p-value of 0.9219 is greater than the significance level \( \alpha = 0.05 \), and the null hypothesis is accepted. According to the educators, therefore, a literary text does have the same effect on students’ cultural awareness and personal growth. These results show that incorporating academic courses within EFL classrooms positively affects students’ language learning and enhances students’ linguistic, cultural, and personal awareness. The majority of respondents answered “Very good” and “Good,” which indicates positive attitudes toward the use of literary texts.

The responses to Question 14 highlight a noticeable relationship between work experience and the evaluation of literary texts as pedagogical tools. While educators with 1–5 and 26–35 years of experience tended to choose “Good,” mid-career respondents with 6 to 25 years of experience selected “Very good,” and educators with more than 35 years of experience typically said “Excellent” (see Figure 2). Again, the author used a chi-squared test to determine whether there was a correlation between variables in this question:

The author tested the following hypotheses:

\( H_0: \) Work experience does not affect the rating of a literary text, such as a novel, regarding its impact on students’ personal growth.

\( H_1: \) Work experience affects the rating of a literary text, such as a novel, regarding its impact on students’ personal growth.

With a p-value of 0.0045, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the data suggests that work experience does affect how educators rate an academic course based on a literary text, such as a novel, in terms of its impact on students’ personal development. In short, most of the educators surveyed believed that teaching Western literature in Saudi universities can support and facilitate EFL learning.
However, the responses to Question 11 also indicated that most respondents (64%) consider both the linguistic and cultural content of the literary texts they teach. This contrasts with the 30% of respondents who indicated that they considered only cultural content, the 2% who considered only linguistic content, and the 4% who claimed not to consider anything. This issue raises the question of whether work experience influences educators’ attitudes toward selecting course material. An examination of the responses to Question 11 by years of work experience indicates that there appears to be little discernible impact (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Educators’ Concerns When Assigning New Literary Texts by Years of Work Experience**

The author conducted a chi-squared test with the following hypotheses:

- **H0**: Work experience does not affect the primary concern when assigning a new text for students.
- **H1**: Work experience affects the primary concern when assigning a new text for students.

The p-value for these results was 0.4038, so the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, work experience does not significantly determine educators’ primary concern when assigning a new text. It may be the case that respondents who claimed to mainly believe the cultural context of their academic course did so due to Saudi Arabia’s traditional and religious environment. This matter also raises further questions regarding educators’ attitudes toward some of the sensitive issues tackled in Western literature, such as erotic content and discussions that are deemed taboo in Saudi Arabia. In short, are educators open to teaching a range of potentially “indecent” or taboo themes while operating in a conservative environment?

Questions 22, 23, 24, 25, and 27 (see Appendix B), which address these more controversial topics, suggest that educators maintain a conservative attitude toward introducing such material. This issue was particularly evident in the responses to Question 22 (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Likelihood of Educators Recommending Avoidance of Taboo or Erotic Subject Matter**

Educators seem to have a different perspective toward answering students’ questions on erotic or taboo themes. This difference is evident in the responses to Question 26: “How well do you answer students’ embarrassing questions (e.g., sexual, traditional, or religious)?” Educators tended to feel that they answered such questions “very well” (47%), “somewhat well” (30%), or “extremely well” (14%). These responses highlight educators’ willingness to engage with complex topics and again raise the question of whether age or work experience correlates with open-mindedness toward discussing sensitive matters. To an extent, this question also tests the validity of the old stereotype that the older the educator, the more traditional and less open-minded they are. The results ultimately showed, however, not only that the stereotype is incorrect but that there was no significant correlation between age, experience, and conservative teaching practices. The author performed chi-squared tests on the responses provided to Question 22, accounting first for age and then years of work experience (see Figures 5 and 6).
The null and alternative hypotheses regarding the influence of age were as follows:

H0: Age does not affect the likelihood of recommendations to skip taboo or erotic images and scenes.

H1: Age affects the likelihood of recommendations to skip taboo or erotic images and scenes.

The p-value of 0.625 is not statistically significant, and the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, age does not affect the likelihood of recommendations to skip taboo or erotic images and scenes.

For the potential influence of work experience, the null and alternative hypotheses were as follows:

H0: Work experience does not affect how likely educators recommend skipping taboo or erotic images and scenes.

H1: Work experience affects how likely educators recommend skipping taboo or erotic images and scenes.

The p-value in this instance was 0.3498, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted as it appears that work experience does not affect the likelihood of educators to recommend skipping taboo or erotic images and scenes.

Thus, this survey has demonstrated that neither age nor extent of work experience affects educators’ attitudes toward teaching such issues. Further research is required to determine whether religion or tradition informs these attitudes, although the general line of inquiry that this finding has opened is explored by the final research question addressed here.

What are educators’ goals in teaching Western literature in the Saudi context, both under the framework of Vision 2030 and in the new era of globalization more generally?

Considering both the responses to Questions 15 and 16 and the objectives that educators believe to be achievable, it is evident that the survey respondents appreciate the value of teaching Western literature in EFL classrooms within Saudi universities (see Figure 7):
Question 15 asked educators to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the teaching of Western literature could help to connect different cultures and worldviews within an era defined by globalization. Most respondents either “strongly agreed” (57%) or “agreed” (32%) with the above statement. This indicates a generally positive attitude toward teaching Western literature in Saudi EFL classrooms. The author collected educators’ points of view through the open-ended Question 16, which asked respondents to explain their answers; their attitudes display a notable homogeneity. The following samples highlight the similarities:

Art is a window to other cultures.

Literature has always helped people see the world beyond their cultural and linguistic context.

Knowing about a different culture, especially through its arts and literature, makes you able to confidently connect and communicate on a deeper level with the people of that culture. Literature records their histories, stories, and ambitions. It also sheds light on their misfortunes and disappointments, whether personally or politically. Most importantly, it gives an overview of their ways of thinking, reasoning, and their cultural attitudes toward others.

Literature provides an insight into the “other” culture. Although students are exposed to Western culture via other mediums, literature provides them with a holistic view by providing them with different contexts of interpretation. They can also present their view of the East to the West through writing back to explain their views.

The attitudes expressed in those statements resonate with the earlier claim of a correlation between teaching students’ literature and students possessing greater levels of cultural awareness. The responses to Questions 29, 30, 31, and 32 (see Appendix C) also reinforce this notion. Educators have recognized that students better understand Western culture through the department’s assigned curriculums and course material.

It was essential to ask, however, whether a department’s assigned literary text had any clear or direct relevance to students’ majors and lives, and Questions Q20 and Q21 addressed this (see Figures 8 & 9):

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Nearly half the educators surveyed felt that the literary content of novels was at least ‘very relevant,’ if not more so, to students’ majors. Most educators also responded that they felt that the course material was either “somewhat relevant” or “very relevant” to students’ lives. To check the significance of that distribution, the results were cross-compared with educators’ work experience. The survey results show that respondents with 1–5, 6–15, and 26–35 years of experience typically answered “Somewhat relevant,” while most educators with 16–25 years of work experience answered “Very relevant.” Educators with over 35 years of work experience considered course materials “extremely relevant” to students’ lives (see Figure 15). The author used a chi-squared test to determine whether there was any significant correlation between the amount of experience that educators had and their opinions about the relevance of Western literature to Saudi life.

The following hypotheses were tested:

H0: Work experience does not affect perceptions of the relevance of the literary content of novels such as Jane Eyre to the lives of Saudi students.

H1: Work experience affects perceptions of the relevance of the literary content of novels such as Jane Eyre to the lives of Saudi students.

A p-value of 0.1099 indicates that work experience does not affect how relevant literary text material is perceived to be to the lives of Saudi students. This result illustrates and emphasizes both the relevance of academic texts to students’ lives and the compatibility of respondents’ replies. Further research could test whether such responses and attitudes are attributable to the respondents living in a globalized era. The author recommends more research in this area.

The survey results from Question 17 and Question 29 also indicated that the respondents believed literary course materials were relevant and beneficial to students’ academic and cultural development (see Figures 11 & 12).
Both questions elicited positive responses from most respondents, who seemed to consider Western literature an essential pedagogical tool to motivate EFL students and enhance their understanding of Western culture. Consequently, these results prompted further analysis to test respondents’ attitudes toward the objectives of their respective English departments’ academic courses, assessed by Questions 33, 34, and 35 (see Figures 13, 14, & 15).
The above results for Questions 33 to 35 show that most respondents had a positive attitude toward the objectives of their departments’ academic courses and were satisfied by students’ achievements. However, it is still necessary to consider educators’ attitudes toward a particular national, rather than institutional, objective, namely, the new Saudi Vision 2030 and the drive to build bridges between East and West. The author targeted this issue in Question 37, which asked respondents whether they believed it to be their duty as educators of Western literature to help Saudi students negotiate the divide between East and West (see Figure 16):

The finding here is notable. Almost 90% of the participants responded to this question positively (“strongly approve” or “approve”). This demonstrates great potential for teaching Western literature in Saudi universities in the future. This attitude and the use of literature challenge not only academic issues but also social and political ones; these represent another critical area that merits further research.

This positive attitude is also demonstrated in the respondents’ satisfaction with their duty as educators of Western literature. This is illustrated by their responses to the same question, “How satisfied are you with your work as an educator of Western literature?”, asked in Question 9 at the beginning of the survey and in Question 38 at the end. Most respondents answered these two questions positively; educators who responded with either “Extremely satisfied” or “Very satisfied” to Question 38 had answered similarly in Question 9. Again, those who chose “Satisfied” in Question 9 typically responded “Satisfied” to Question 38. There is therefore an apparent relationship between these two questions. Educators appear to be consistent in their opinions regarding their satisfaction with their work as educators of Western literature. This consistency in their views indicates a strong correlation between educators’ positive attitudes toward teaching literature and their appreciation of literature.

Discussion

This research attempted to uncover educators’ attitudes toward teaching Western literature and the significance of teaching that literature. The results yield some valuable pedagogical implications regarding what Western literature can offer EFL students in Saudi universities. They have demonstrated a positive attitude on the part of educators and an encouraging belief that teaching Western literature can achieve objectives that transcend the boundaries of language and text. This paper has shown that teaching Western literature to EFL students can be an effective instrument for developing target language skills. Thus, such practice and positive attitudes toward it are compatible with the three models proposed earlier by Carter and Long (1991). Accordingly, the results tend not to support the stance of those scholars, such as Edmondson (1997), who argue against the use of literature as an instrument for language teaching.
To conclude, the results prove that teaching Western literature in Saudi universities as a significant part of EFL programs has provided undeniable benefits, including:

- Improving and expanding students’ language, personal and cultural awareness
- Adding to students’ knowledge of the broader, globalizing world, as some literary texts can be seen as authentic material
- Helping students understand and respect the ‘Other’
- Helping students develop their appreciation of the literature of the ‘Other’
- Promoting tolerance of cultural differences
- Helping to bridge the divide between East and West

These findings are rewarding in a broader sense and particularly so in light of the processes of globalization and the Vision 2030 agenda.

Conclusion

In sum, this study will contribute to teaching Western literature in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia. It reaffirms that integrating Western literature in EFL programs in Saudi universities both involves and results in more than merely the teaching of language and linguistic skills or providing education about literature solely as an art form in aesthetic terms. That the teaching of Western literature is more meaningful and purposeful manifests itself in the educators’ positive attitudes toward its use in EFL classrooms. This study is distinct since it explains how teaching Western literary texts can enrich EFL students’ overall learning experience in Saudi Arabia.

Recommendations

Since this study focused on educators and the teaching of Western literature to EFL students in a Saudi environment, future studies could examine the effects of such pedagogy on Saudi students from the students’ perspective.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the participants for their generosity in contributing to this study. I would also like to thank my colleagues in EFL teaching, Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghamdi, Dr. Haifa A. Al-Noafie, and Dr. Reem S. Alkhammash, who advised me on instrumental validity and reliability before collecting data.

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Endnotes

[1] Vision 2030 is a bold yet achievable blueprint for an ambitious nation. It expresses, as The Royal Highness Prince Mohammad Bin Salman declares, “our long-term goals and expectations and it is built upon our country’s unique strengths and capabilities. It guides our aspirations towards a new phase of development – to create a vibrant society in which all citizens can fulfill their dreams, hopes, and ambitions to succeed in a thriving economy.” Quoted in https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en

References
Appendices

Appendix A: Responses to Questions 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10

Figure 17: Age of Respondents

Figure 18: Respondents’ Experience of the West
Figure 19: Distribution of Respondents by Academic Title

Figure 20: Respondents by Years of Work Experience

Figure 21: Educators’ Perceptions of Familiarity with Western Culture

Figure 22: Time Spent on Discussion Taboo and Erotic Elements
Appendix B: Responses to Questions 23, 24, 25 and 27

Figure 23: Participation of Students in Discussions Concerning Taboo and Erotic Elements

Figure 24: Difficulty of Eye Contact with Students While Discussing Taboo and Erotic Elements

Figure 25: Educators’ Level of Concern about Being Misunderstood when Discussing Taboo and Erotic Elements
Appendix C: Responses to Questions 29, 30, 31, and 32

**Figure 26:** Educators’ Perceptions of Helpfulness of the Curriculum to Students’ Understanding of Western Culture

**Figure 27:** Time Spent Discussing Cultural Differences between East and West

**Figure 28:** Educators’ Perceptions of the Amount of Stress Given to Understanding Rather Than Memorizing

**Figure 29:** Educator’s Perceptions of Value of Literary Course Material to Students’ Understanding of Western Culture
Appendix D: Educators’ Questionnaire

Educators’ Attitudes toward Teaching Western Literature to Saudi University Students

Part 1: Personal Information

This questionnaire is for data collection in connection with a research work titled “Educators’ Attitudes toward Teaching Western Literature to Saudi University Students.” This study aims to gather information on educators’ background and attitudes toward teaching Western literature, which includes not only language skills but also cultural, social, and religious issues. Hence, this paper examines how educators’ backgrounds play an important role in influencing their attitude toward teaching Western literature to Saudi students. This data will be used only for the intended purpose and shall not be shared with anyone else.

* 1. What is your nationality?

* 2. What is your gender?

○ Female

○ Male

* 3. What is your age?

○ 22–30

○ 31–40

○ 41–50

○ 51–60

○ 61+

4. Have you lived in the West?

○ Yes

○ No

5. If yes, indicate where and for how long:

* 6. What is your academic title?

○ TA

○ Lecturer

○ Assistant Prof.

○ Associate Prof.

○ Professor

7. Name of affiliation:

○ Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University

○ Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University

○ Jeddah University

○ King Abdulaziz University

○ King Saud University

○ Taif University

○ Umm Al-Qura University
University of Princess Nora

**Part 2: Professional Experience**

*8. Years of work experience:*

- 1–5
- 6–15
- 16–25
- 26–35
- 36+

*9. How satisfied are you with your work as a educator of Western literature?*

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

*10. How knowledgeable are you in regards to Western culture?*

- Extremely knowledgeable
- Very knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Not so knowledgeable
- Not at all knowledgeable

*11. When you consider assigning a new text (e.g., a novel) for your students, what is your primary concern?*

- The linguistic content
- The cultural content
- Both the linguistic and cultural content
- Do not bother

*12. Overall, how would you rate an academic course, such as a novel, regarding the student’s linguistic outcome?*

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

*13. Overall, how would you rate an academic course, such as a novel, regarding to the student’s cultural awareness outcome?*
* 14. Overall, how would you rate an academic course, such as novel, regarding to the student’s personal growth?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

* 15. Do you agree that teaching Western literature can be used to connect worlds (East and West) in this new era of globalization?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

* 16. Please provide a reason for your answer.

………………………………………….

* 17. Do you agree that literature motivates EFL students because of its natural and authentic connection to the real world?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Part 4: Attitude toward Literary Genres:

* 18. If you had the choice to choose an academic course, which of the following would you choose?

- Drama
- Poetry
- Short Story
- Novel
Part 5: Attitude toward the Course Material:
* 19. How likely do you recommend teaching novels which includes erotic scenes, as a course, to a colleague?
  - Very likely
  - Likely
  - Neither likely nor unlikely
  - Unlikely
  - Very unlikely

* 20. How relevant is the literary course material of novels such as Jane Eyre to the students’ major?
  - Extremely relevant
  - Very relevant
  - Somewhat relevant
  - Not so relevant
  - Not at all relevant

* 21. How suitable is the academic course material of the novels such as Jane Eyre to the Saudi student’s life?
  - Extremely relevant
  - Very relevant
  - Somewhat relevant
  - Not so relevant
  - Not at all relevant

Part 6: Attitude toward Taboo or Erotic Images/Scenes:
* 22. How likely are you to recommend skipping taboo or erotic images and scenes?
  - Very likely
  - Likely
  - Neither likely nor unlikely
  - Unlikely
  - Very unlikely

* 23. How much class time is spent discussing the taboo or erotic images and scenes?
  - A great deal
  - A lot
  - A moderate amount
  - A little
  - None at all

* 24. How well do your students participate in discussions concerning taboo or erotic images and scenes?
* 25. How easy or difficult is it to get eye contact with your students while discussing taboo or erotic images, scenes, or ideas?
   - Extremely well
   - Very well
   - Somewhat well
   - Not so well
   - Not at all well

* 26. How well do you answer students’ embarrassing questions (e.g., sexual, traditional, or religious)?
   - Extremely well
   - Very well
   - Somewhat well
   - Not so well
   - Not at all well

* 27. How concerned are you that students might misunderstand you when discussing taboo or erotic topics?
   - Extremely concerned
   - Very concerned
   - Somewhat concerned
   - Not so concerned
   - Not at all concerned

Part 7: Attitude toward Literary Texts:
* 28. If you were asked to teach Pride and Prejudice or The Scarlet Letter, which one would you choose and why?

* 29. How helpful is the curriculum of your literature courses to your students’ understanding of Western culture?
   - Extremely helpful
   - Very helpful
   - Somewhat helpful
   - Not so helpful
   - Not at all helpful
* 30. How much class time is spent discussing the cultural differences between West and East?
   - Much too much
   - Too much
   - The right amount
   - Too little
   - Much too little

* 31. How much do you stress the importance of understanding the knowledge rather than memorizing facts to your students?
   - Much too much
   - Too much
   - The right amount
   - Too little
   - Much too little

* 32. How worthwhile was the literary course material to your students’ understanding of Western culture?
   - Extremely worthwhile
   - Very worthwhile
   - Somewhat worthwhile
   - Not so worthwhile
   - Not at all worthwhile

Part 8: Attitude toward the Objective of the Literary Text:
* 33. How clearly do you explain the objective of the academic course to your students?
   - Extremely clear
   - Very clear
   - Somewhat clear
   - Not so clear
   - Not at all clear

* 34. How many of the course objectives do you meet?
   - All
   - Most
   - Some
   - A few
   - None

* 35. How well do you say your colleagues who teach academic courses agree with the department’s goals of the study?
**Part 9: Personal Judgement as Educator:**

*36. Do you think the credit hours given to your academic course are:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

*37. In this new era of the 2030 vision, do you think it is your duty as an educator of Western literature to help Saudi students bridge the gap between the West and East?

- Strongly approve
- Approve
- Neither approve nor disapprove
- Disapprove
- Strongly disapprove

*38. How satisfied are you with your work as an educator of Western literature?

- Extremely satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Not so satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

**Part 10: Understanding the Attitude of Students while Teaching Western Literature**

On a scale of 1–5, please indicate the degree to which you agree to the statements given below based on your experience. (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree)

*39. Indicate the degree to which you agree to the statements given below based on your experience.

1. I feel teaching Western (English/American) literature makes me a better/more competent educator than others. 1 2 3 4 5
2. From my English literature classes, I feel that students believe Western culture (English or American) is better than other cultures. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I think students tend to learn Western literature to understand the Western culture to promote Islam. 1 2 3 4 5
4. The students feel that learning Western literature means they are educated, open-minded people. 1 2 3 4 5
5. The students sometimes worry about losing their identity and Islamic culture in Western (English/American) literature class. 1 2 3 4 5
6. The students find learning the culture of the other is fun and exciting. 1 2 3 4 5
7. The students think learning Western literature is a wastage of time as they believe they are irrelevant to their course. 1 2 3 4 5
8. The students think learning Western literature will improve their language skills. 1 2 3 4 5
### Part 11: Factors Affecting Western Literature Teaching in Accordance to the New Vision of 2030

On a scale of 1–5, please indicate the degree to which you agree to the statements given below based on your experience. *(1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree)*

*40. Indicate the degree to which you agree to the statements given below based on your experience.*

1. Western literature classes in Saudi Universities suffer from a sheer lack of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

   1   2   3   4   5

2. Educators face severe issues with students' aptitude, initial preparedness, and motivation toward learning Western literature.

   1   2   3   4   5

3. The educators' skills and expertise, which include; language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, learner-focused teaching, and professionalism, affect their way of teaching Western literature.

   1   2   3   4   5

4. Educators with a positive attitude toward teaching Western literature usually strive for better performances.

   1   2   3   4   5

5. The educators' self-efficacy have a considerable influence on instructional practices and classroom behavior and students' achievement and motivation.

   1   2   3   4   5

6. Social, cultural, and religious sensitivities are related to both students’ and educators’ performances.

   1   2   3   4   5
Collocation Networks of Selected Words in Academic Writing: A Corpus-Based Study

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Abstract
This study aims at shedding light on the linguistic significance of collocation networks in the academic writing context. Following Firth’s principle “You shall know a word by the company it keeps.” The study intends to examine three selected nodes (i.e. research, study, and paper) shared collocations in an academic context. This is achieved by using the corpus linguistic tool; GraphColl in #LancsBox software version 5 which was announced in June 2020 in analyzing selected nodes. The study focuses on academic writing of two corpora which were designed and collected especially to serve the purpose of the study. The corpora consist of a collection of abstracts extracted from two different academic journals that publish for writers from different countries around the world. This corpus-based study aims at examining the significance of chunks of language in texts. The concept of collocations is crucial in corpus linguistics to identify semantic relations. This can help in the teaching and learning processes. Furthermore, this study is conducted to answer the following research questions; first, whether the three words study, paper, and research are used interchangeably in the corpora or not? Second, what are the shared collocational associations surrounding the selected nodes? Finally, it is worth noting that the study of collocations highlights the linguistic features of texts through computational analytical tools that can save time and help to gain objective results systematically. The findings show that ‘research’ and ‘study’ are used rather interchangeably in the writing of the abstracts; however, ‘paper’ has fewer shared collocations in the same academic context.

Keywords: academic writing, collocational networks, corpus linguistic, GraphColl, linguistic significance, node

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Introduction

Knowing collocation networks is an essential part of linguistic competence. Identifying words relations has an immense significance in language learning because it brings the learners’ attention to words relations. However, Nagano and Kitao (2007) stress that the study of collocation, in general, is neglected or has been given less attention in comparison with other aspects of the English language such as grammar, phonetics, and phonology in English as a foreign language (EFL)/English as a second language (ESL) context. Nagano and Kitao further illustrate that learners even advanced ones misuse collocations due to the influence of their first language. The researcher here agrees with these insightful points and argues that this difficulty of dealing with collocation is due to the limited exposure to authentic learning situations. Thus, this paper presents a study of collocations in their real authentic context. It is believed that learning any aspects of language deprived of their real situation will lead to unsatisfying results. From this point, it is hypothesized that learners can achieve their goal of learning collocation through GraphColl enables them to identify words in context and observe semantic relations in a systematic, objective way (Brezina, 2018). In this paper, the main aim is to show what are the associations related to the nodes; research, study, and paper? First, a historical background will be presented to reveal the significance of the study of collocation. Thus, the current study aims at answering these basic research questions: first, do the three words study, paper, and research are used interchangeably or synonymously? Second, what are the shared collocational associations surrounding the selected nodes? Thus, this article presents a practical study to identify and explain collocation networks within academic writing.

Literature Review

Definitions and Historical Background

Baker (2016) demonstrated that studies on collocation networks using GraphColl give detailed and rigorous analysis opposite to the traditional studies that focus on ‘pairwise relationships’ among words. Similarly, Gablasova, Brezina, and McEnery (2017) ascertained that collocational network as a unit of formulaic language provides useful insights about language learning not only in the first language (L1) but also in second language (L2) language production. Observing collocational relations or cross-associations of the words in certain text/s or discourse can describe the ‘aboutness’ of the examined data (Brezina, 2016). Furthermore, El-Dakhs (2015) confirms that “collocations enormously contribute to efficient language comprehension and production. Regarding comprehension, memorizing chunks helps learners predict the content of texts, and automatically enhances comprehension”. In this respect, Davis & Kryszewska (2012) confirm that readers can understand one meaning or two when a word stands alone or in isolation. However, we can get a broader significance when the same word is in company with other words.

Sinclair (1991, 2004) defines the concept of collocations as "the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text” (p. 170) usually the span of four words to the left and right of a selected node. Furthermore, Nesselhauf (2005) explained that the term collocation refers to "some kind of syntagmatic relation of words" (p. 11). The study of collocations dates back to the 1960s as Hori (2004) illustrated. The concept of collocation is discussed in a seminar at Edinburgh University and among the participants were Halliday and Sinclair, whose paper "beginning of the study of Lexis" in 1966 shows some problematic issues related to the computational study of collocations.
Moreover, basic terms such as (node, span, cluster, collocation) have appeared since that time. The study of usual collocations in English is the major interest of both Halliday and Sinclair, whereas Angus McIntosh has an interest in studying unusual collocations in literary works. McIntosh's (1966) work "patterns and ranges" distinguishes between two notions range and pattern (Hori, 2004).

In the 1970s, one of the most influential works was *English Collocational Studies*, which applies the computer-based study of collocations, the authors of the work face problems with the size of the corpora and they have to cope with a certain problem related to the application of the computer. In the 1980s and onwards, there has been a dramatic development in technology mainly in computer and computational studies and the toolkits that are used in the analysis of texts as well as the compiling of data. All these have paved the way for fruitful studies of collocations. Important works include Sinclair's book (1991) *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. It is crucial to mention that all the scholars Halliday, Sinclair, McIntosh are originally influenced by Firth’s (1957) ideas in his paper (Modes of Meaning). Based on what have been mentioned above, this paper aims at contributing to the field by examining collocation networks in practice.

*Studying Collocations in Literary Work: Investigating Authors' Style*

In this respect, Greenbaum (1970) emphasized that the study of collocation in literary language may reveal certain features of the writer's literary style. The idea of collocation networks was primarily suggested by Phillips (1983) in his Ph.D. thesis as Brezina, McEnery, and Wattam (2015) remarkably noted. This was followed by other important studies by Philips (1985, 1989) focusing on the same domain.

The years following show the interest of scholars to delve into this particular area of study. For example, Brezina et al. (2015) offered a new perspective on the study of the collocational networks by introducing GraphColl "graphical collocations" tool to examine and get insightful results about the semantic relations of words.

The work conducted by Brezina et al. (2015) is replicable of McEnerys' study (2006). Instead of applying WordSmith tools, they used GraphColl with the main aim of focusing on methodological practices in finding collocational associations. Furthermore, they present some limitations of previous studies on collocation networks. Starting with Phillip's research (1989) whose methodology is unreplicable and the tool that is used for the analysis is not available anymore. Another limitation is represented by William's work (1998) though, is it replicable but the research gives few details about the span, and most importantly, it does not consider directionality as a criterion for its methodological purposes. In this study, they argued the word *affair* can be found in Bank National Corpora (BNC) collocates with the word *love* and the latter collocates with words like (madly, unrequited, undying) in the following: Madly Love, unrequited love, and undying love.

The above three words are not connected with "affair". However, in their argument, Brezina et al. (2015) notified that the relationship between the word *affair* and the words that are collocated with *love* should not be neglected and researchers should pay heed to the core word and its connections in context. It is worth noting that corpus tools help to identify essential or
eligible collocations for studying. Williams (2001) points out the major difference between collocations and idioms. He illustrates that collocations are easy to understand and less vague.

**Types of Collocations**
As a matter of fact, there are two types of collocations: lexical and grammatical collocations. The former type usually contains two lexical elements (noun+ adjective, verb+ adjective). While the latter, basically is formed by combining a verb and preposition (e.g. depend on) or adjective with a preposition such as (good at, ready for, bored with). (for more details see El-Dakhs, 2015; Lewis, 2000 ). Thus, the current paper looks forward to revealing such combinations of the selected three words.

**Methods**
The corpora of this research consist of a collection of abstracts that have been chosen from two different academic journals. The first corpus (29377 tokens) is a collection of abstracts collected from The Journal of College of Education for Women issued quarterly from the College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad / Iraq. The abstracts are related to non-native speakers of the English language and were published in the period 2018 to 2020. The researchers must translate the abstracts into the English language. The specialty of these research papers is in the field of Humanities including but not limited to (Arabic, English, History, Geography, Home Economics, Kindergarten studies, Educational and Psychological Sciences, Quranic sciences, sociology Computer sciences). The purpose behind examining these translated abstracts is to find the main collocational networks of mentioned nodes and their contexts. It is hypothesized that these words have been used similarly in comparison to native speakers.

While the second corpus consists of abstracts collected from another open access international Scopus indexed journal Cogent Arts & Humanities deals with arts and humanities and multidisciplinary areas of studies and accepts publications from different researchers all over the world. This corpus focuses on abstracts of research articles published during 2018 and 2020. The total size of this corpus is 25464 tokens and 5131-word types. To ensure objective results, the sizes, as well as the years of publications of the two corpora, are somehow close. However, the authors of the second journal are from different areas and linguistic backgrounds. This matter helps to check how a variety of authors around the globe employ word collocations in their academic writing.

**Procedure and Data Analysis**
*Extracting collocation networks Using GraphColl*
GraphColl is one of the tools in the free software #LancBox introduced by Brezina, et al (2015). It is a friendly tool that helps to identify collocation, keywords, concordances, frequencies, and dispersions. This can be systematically conducted by employing quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Updates to the functionality of this tool are continuous which makes this tool practical and friendly to use.
Discussion and Results

It has been noticed that the authors of these abstracts have used three words (study, paper, research) interchangeably. Generally, these nodes are used to refer to academic writing work that presents an analysis, evaluation, and results. Their academic achievement is supposed to be scientific, rigorous, and objective. It is hypothesized in this current study, that the three words have shared collocations since they are used and employed constantly in academic contexts. Collocational associations can be pointed out systematically through GraphColl. This is what distinguishes this tool from the other myriad tools (e.g. AntConc, WordSmith Tools) with the same purpose of identifying collocations.

Shared collocations among the target nodes study, paper, and research can help researchers and those who are inquisitive in meaning, semantic relations, and the co-occurrence of words. From this theoretical standpoint, the following research questions have been tackled:

1- How do the three words study, paper and research are used interchangeably or synonymously?
2- What are the shared collocational associations surrounding these words?

GraphColl as a tool is used to identify the collocations. The statistical measure is the MI (Mutual information) score with statistic cut off value three) to discard infrequent associations. Other collocation parameters notation (CPN) include minimum collocate frequency C.5 and minimum collocation frequency equals NC.1. Function words removed.

Figure 1. Collocation network around research [MI(3), C5, NC1, 5L 5R1]

Figure 2. Collocation networks around research [MI(3), C5, NC1, 5L 5R1]
In this figure, the statistical measure is the MI score with statistic cut-off value increased to five. The results show that the most frequent words according to the frequency include (this, aims, current, method, achieve, goal). These collocations show how the writers of the examined research papers aim to achieve certain goals by using verified methods. The distal demonstrative function word ‘this’ occurs 39 times in a collocational relationship with research and its frequency in the whole corpus is 195 which equals 20%.

Table 1. Research collocations threshold 5 collocation frequency 5
Freq:176 – collocates:19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>position</th>
<th>Collocate</th>
<th>Freq coll.</th>
<th>Freq(corpus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>My</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Applied</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Following</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Consists</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Indentify</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Achieve</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Tool</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Studied</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>recommendations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>This</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Collocation networks around research in corpus 2 [MI(3), C5, NC1, 5L 5R1]
From figure 3. and Table 2., it is clear that the word *design* as a content word has a strong collocational relation with the target node *research*. More contextual examples of the case include:

- A slow and prosessional approach to co-developing a framework connecting transformation design and participatory action.
- Complexity. To this end, using an experimental design, two language institutes were randomly selected.
- In-learning for their accounting education. The survey design was employed to collect data through.
- A qualitative research design was employed to collect data through.
- Shared collocations of the nodes research/study

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**Figure 4.** The node ‘*design*’ mostly occurs in the right context.

The node ‘*design*’ mostly occurs in the right context following *research* as shown in Figure 4. It is worth noting that function words have the biggest opportunity to accompany *research* in the second corpus, for instance, *(was, this, an, on, with, were, by, and, is, to, that, a, the).*
In a pursuit to find shared collocations of the nodes *study*, *research*, and *paper* in the two selected corpora (abstracts of two journals). It is important to check the collocation of each target word. Figure 6. illustrates how the word *study* is surrounded with important content words opposite to *research* which inclines to co-occur with function words.

For more details about ‘*study*’ which has the total frequency in the corpus 140 and (28) collocates as shown in figure 6. and its surrounding relations with words focusing mainly on content words.

Table 3. *Rank collocates  Freq coll. Freq corpus  position*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Collocate</th>
<th>Freq coll.</th>
<th>Freq corpus</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>investigated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>aimed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>investigate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>examined</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>aims</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>present</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>current</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>selected</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>findings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>learning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>also</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>data</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. reveals that writers use past tense form in writing their abstracts. It also illustrates that the associated words with the node *study*, such as (investigated, aimed, examined) in comparison with the present tense form (i.e. investigate, aims) as verbs in the right position as shown below in the examples in Table 4:
Table 4 concordance lines of Study with investigated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>of scaffolding practices of assessment for learning.</th>
<th>also investigated EFL teachers’ perceptions of</th>
<th>assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>formal financial net of the economy. This</td>
<td>investigated the dynamic causality amid digital</td>
<td>finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>corporate sustainable development in Nigeria. The</td>
<td>investigated the impact of using two cooperative</td>
<td>practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a key aspect of this work. This</td>
<td>has investigated the thematic structure of RA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of slavery through raising consciousness. The</td>
<td>investigated the ways in which two major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The node Study is likely to collocate with investigate in the right context. In contrast, it mostly collocates with the definite article and the proximal demonstrative pronoun ‘this’. In other cases, as demonstrated in the last example. Study can be modified by the words current or present proceeded by the definite article. While the second highest collocate is the word aimed as exemplified in these concordance lines:

Table 5. study concordance lines with aimed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>serious environmental pollution in socio-economic poverty.</th>
<th>aimed to describe narratives of these patients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>huge court fines cripple media outlets. This</td>
<td>aimed to investigate the L2 learners’, EFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by many scholars in South Africa. This</td>
<td>is therefore aimed at critically answering the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>act differently in developing argumentative essays. This</td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and language learning in particular, the present</td>
<td>aimed to compare the rhetorical models followed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>learning practices are also addressed. The current</td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 on industrialization in developing countries. This</td>
<td>aimed at identifying the motivating factors affecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>as visible members in their societies This</td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>migrants and members of host communities. This</td>
<td>aimed at investigating how meaning-focused input and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with proper difficulty levels. This mixed methods</td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aimed at investigating the influence of top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aimed to check the effect of Jigsaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aimed to compare the impact of high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>study</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aimed at examining the relationship between EFL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. the collocations of the node study in Corpus 1
In the same way, *study* has been checked in the first corpus to examine its associations by different authors basically Iraqi non-native speakers of English.

**Table 6 Study collocates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Collocate</th>
<th>Freq coll.</th>
<th>Freq corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Showed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Also</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>recommendations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>This</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>At</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Is</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>To</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>That</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>The</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>3054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>An</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Of</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Has</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>On</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Their</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Was</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>As</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8 Three shared collocations between paper and study in corpus 1*
The function words as illustrated in Figure 8 are the shared collocations between study and paper. For example, these nodes can be premodified by ‘this’ which is not quite significant because function words can accompany many words in the language. Thus, it is not clear here that both paper and study can be used interchangeably.

Figure 9. Shows retrieval results of Threshold 3
It can be noticed that at this value a bulk of function words associate our search. Since the main straightforward goal of this current study is to pay heed to content words, the threshold value is increased to five as shown in the below figure 10. This does not necessarily imply that studying function words are of less important significance.

Figure 10. Shows retrieval results of Threshold reduced to 5 to get rid of frequent function words
In this figure 10, the focus is mainly on basic words that function as shared collocation between research and study. The node paper seems to be isolated and shares only one word in for example ‘this research paper aims’. This leads to the fact that both nodes ‘study’ and ‘research’ are used interchangeably by the writers of published journal articles. They do not usually tend to use the word ‘paper’ in their abstracts.

Table 7. The twenty-one shared collocated among paper, study and research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Collocate</th>
<th>Freq (corpus)</th>
<th>No of nodes</th>
<th>Nodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>aims</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>an</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>current</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>has</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>identity</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>paper, research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>of</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>an</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>recommendations</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>results</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>that</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>paper, research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>paper, research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>with</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>research, study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. Study collocates in Cogent Arts abstract corpus

Figure 12. Collocates of paper in Corpus 2
It is clear that the word ‘paper’ is used here by the authors to refer to study or research. Figure 12 shows there is a tendency that the node paper collocated with (to-infinitive) nominal clauses (the base form of the verb preceded by ‘to’) for instance:

- The paper attempts to investigate
- The paper aims to raise
- To establish
- To address

**Figure 13. Collocates of the node paper in corpus 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>File</th>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>silenced than in the actual dialogue. This paper deals with Pinter’s The Caretaker and how</td>
<td>paper to deals with Pinter’s The Caretaker and how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>became weak in that era. The present paper tackles the Austrian-Egyptian conflict in the 2nd</td>
<td>paper to tackles the Austrian-Egyptian conflict in the 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>this family with the Egyptian rulers. Also, this paper reveals the historical hostility between the two</td>
<td>paper to reveals the historical hostility between the two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>the main findings of the study. This paper aims to study Antonia’s character and her</td>
<td>paper to aims to study Antonia’s character and her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>pupil is not balanced. The present research paper aims at describing this phenomenon through statistics</td>
<td>paper to aims at describing this phenomenon through statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>semantics of the English preposition in. The paper pays attention to the polysemous words Harry</td>
<td>paper to pays attention to the polysemous words Harry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>selected to be the data of this paper. The first is an Arabic one by</td>
<td>paper to selected to be the data of this paper. The first is an Arabic one by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>by a number of news agencies. The paper follows Halliday (1987) information structure theory by</td>
<td>paper to follows Halliday (1987) information structure theory by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>is the most appropriate one. In this paper, I examined the specification phenomenon (نرسي) in</td>
<td>paper to is the most appropriate one. In this paper, I examined the specification phenomenon (نرسي) in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>the part of the qualitative analysis, the paper will explain some related concepts generated in</td>
<td>paper to the part of the qualitative analysis, the paper will explain some related concepts generated in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>various material and non-material means. This paper sheds light on the concept of the</td>
<td>paper to various material and non-material means. This paper sheds light on the concept of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>for themselves nor for their nation. This paper is important as it discusses the post-colonial</td>
<td>paper to for themselves nor for their nation. This paper is important as it discusses the post-colonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>spiritual loss of these young natives. The paper aims at examining this state during that</td>
<td>paper to spiritual loss of these young natives. The paper aims at examining this state during that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>that period, and the findings of the paper show that the Cherokee nation has no</td>
<td>paper to that period, and the findings of the paper show that the Cherokee nation has no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>Win, Slaming, C3 and C2. This research paper attempts to explore problems facing the teaching</td>
<td>paper to Win, Slaming, C3 and C2. This research paper attempts to explore problems facing the teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>critical kind of research. As such, this paper is a critical pragmatic investigation for this</td>
<td>paper to critical kind of research. As such, this paper is a critical pragmatic investigation for this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>underpin the illegitimate issue under investigation. This paper sets forth the task of answering</td>
<td>paper to underpin the illegitimate issue under investigation. This paper sets forth the task of answering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>phenomena common among kindergarten children. The current paper highlighted an important character represented by the</td>
<td>paper to phenomena common among kindergarten children. The current paper highlighted an important character represented by the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>forth American president. The importance of this paper to by revealing his personality in terms</td>
<td>paper to forth American president. The importance of this paper to by revealing his personality in terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Abstracts coll</td>
<td>other methods of all this? In this paper, we try to show the importance of</td>
<td>paper to other methods of all this? In this paper, we try to show the importance of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, the concordance lines of the word paper shows that the writers in corpus 1 use the language differently in terms of using verbs directly after the node paper as shown in the right context instead of to-infinitive for instance:

- This paper reveals
- The present paper tackles
- This paper deals with
- This paper (sheds light on, attempts, aims, shows, highlighted, follows...etc).
Findings

Though as researchers we might think that the nodes (research, paper, and study) are used interchangeably in the corpora, quantitative corpus data shows these words are not interchangeable at least within the limits of the current study. The data point to the fact that both paper and study share different collocates. In contrast, findings indicate that both nodes ‘study’ and ‘research’ are used interchangeably by the writers of published journal articles. They do not tend to use the word ‘paper’ in their abstracts. This implies that ‘study’ and ‘research’ have shared collocational networks as illustrated in figure 9.

The findings of this current study have important significance to researchers/teachers who are interested in semantic relations and the study of collocational networks. Furthermore, it can give foreign learners of language an idea about the associations of words in context. This emphasis is pointed out in the work of Brezina et al. (2015) “..collocational relationship has important implications for our understanding of language and word meaning. Collocation networks show how meanings of words are formed through multiple repeated associations that can be documented only in language corpora” (p. 165). Moreover, this study shows teachers a way of engaging students or learners to the target language they learn by employing a corpus tool to facilitate locating aspects that can be missed by manual analysis only.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The research is primarily conducted with aim of examining the collocation network of selected words in the abstracts of published papers in two respected international academic journals. It is worth mentioning here that corpus linguistics helps to find ways to examine and study collocations in context. GraphColl as free software helps researchers to gain a better understanding of some unexplored aspects of authentic language. Introducing a new dimension as Brezina et al. (2015) emphasized to the other dimensions adds reliability and systematicity to the investigation of collocations. The findings show that ‘research’ and ‘study’ are used rather interchangeably in the writing of the abstracts of the two corpora; however, ‘paper’ has fewer shared collocations in the same academic context. Moreover, the nodes have mainly lexical collocations instead of grammatical ones.

Finally, within the teaching context, the importance of using corpora in the classroom lies in the main concept of introducing students to discover patterns of the language and to enhance students' linguistic competence through noticing and dealing with authentic language. They can learn about the behavior of words in context. The relationship between words, thus, is revealed through the collocational networks. However, some limitations might have appeared. Some teachers might feel intimidated by using technology to teach language. They might lack the required experience to deal with computational tools. Moreover, the lack of the necessary equipment is another possibility that teachers might face. One more issue, a large number of students can hinder learning and require systematic guidance and instructions. However, these issues can be tackled by the use of free online corpora and other friendly tools that can be accessed by the mobile devices of the learners. Finally, the integration of online teaching through many available platforms can save time and give more practice opportunities.

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References


A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Speech of Her Royal Highness Princess Reema Bint Bander Al-Saud: A Saudi Woman Empowerment Model

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Abstract
Princess Reema Bint Bander Al-Saud is a Saudi woman leader who is nowadays serving as the Saudi ambassador to the United States of America. She has been serving passionately and effectively in both the public and private sectors of Saudi Arabia, setting a perfect example of Saudi women’s empowerment in different fields. This paper gives a comprehensive linguistic analysis of selected spoken texts of HRH Princess Reema. The research focuses on both the rhetoric and the persuasive patterns based on the linguistic structures proposed by Van Dijk’s theory and Norman Fairclough’s reflections on Ideology. This paper has successfully identified some essential linguistic strategies and how they are conducted skillfully by HRH Princess Reema Bint Bander with a focus on the concept of Saudi women empowerment. This research adopts a qualitative method based on observations and thematic interpretations of selected texts of a public speech given by HRH Princess Reema. Moreover, this paper investigates the linguistic and the stylistic markers that Princess Reema applied in her public remarks that makes her address sounds very persuasive and convincing. This research concludes by discussing some linguistic themes that HRH Princess Reema mentioned, such as the concepts of Conservatism, Socialism, and Liberalism feminist ideology, which create a perfect model of Saudi woman empowerment aligned with the Vision of 2030.

Keywords: Arab Ideology, critical discourse, empowerment, gender, language, leadership, power, Saudi women.

Introduction

In 1932, Saudi Arabia has been declared as a kingdom; hence, economic, political, and social transformations started to take place. These transformations have shown some positive effects on Saudi women’s empowerment and gender equality. However, Saudi women faced new challenges and some cultural issues that have prevented them from participating effectively in Saudi society. According to Almujaibel (2014), Saudi women sought to ensure their social and personal identities concerning empowering themselves far from gender roles. Tønnessen, (2016) claimed that other factors that have affected Saudi women’s perspectives towards their roles in their society such as, social media, studying abroad, and being open to the internet as a source of knowledge and e-learning. Ammar (2018) stated that although Saudi women are doing their best to participate effectively in developing their country, their efforts have been neglected as they are simply “women.” Before to vision; (2030), Saudi men have been supported by being given more opportunities than Saudi women in persuading higher education, studying abroad, being assigned high positions in governmental sectors, and in being decisions makers.

According to vision 2030, Saudi women are expected to play various significant roles in the development of Saudi Arabia. Women's situation in Saudi Arabia is improving in response to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's vision 2030, which predicts that women's status will improve over time in line with the government's future. As a result, General Authority for Statistics (GAST) revealed that women's participation in the Workforce rate, has significantly increased to achieve 27.5%, in comparison to the scored rate in the first quarter of the year 2020, which was 24%. When the Saudi government realized that women are very effective partners with men in different fields, despite the customs and traditions that have governed Saudi society for years, the government of Saudi Arabia took the decision to empower Saudi women in general as leaders and social influencers.

Moreover, with the emergence of the 2030 Vision, higher governmental work has been given to Saudi women, such as being granted the position of "ambassador" for the first time in Saudi history. This step allows Saudi women to manifest their distinguished capabilities in the political field. This paper focuses on the speech of the first Saudi ambassador in Saudi history: HRH Princess Reema Bint Bander Bin Sultan Al-Saud. She is a member of the World Bank's advisory council for the Women Entrepreneurs, a Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee member, and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Women in Sports Commission. According to the Olympic Council of Asia, Princess Reema has been selected on the Forbes lists of the 200 Most Powerful Arab Women.

This research focuses on investigating the linguistic strategies that HRH Princess Reema used in her public speech in the empowerment of Saudi women. The study aims to analyze the linguistic and the stylistic manifestation that made HRH Princess Reema’s speech move and inspire according to social media reaction. It also discusses the potential power of discourse in achieving social change and women empowerment.

Moreover, as this paper entitled “A Critical Discourse Analysis of HRH Princess Reema’s Speech,” it is essential to discuss how social theorists and linguists use the term ‘Discourse’ as a reference for any investigation deals with language and social practices. In other words, language is not only socially shaped but also socially shaping. This notion explains the
need for not only linguistic but also intertextual analysis, which Fairclough calls ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’; to focus on the relationship between discourse practices and how they have been influenced by social change (Fairclough, 2004.) Discourse is defined as a set of statements that are systematically organized (Foucault, 1972.) These statements intend to express both meanings and values. Discourse is mainly examined through pragmatic and conversation analysis (Van Dijk, 2011.) That makes discourse an essential part of social interactions between humans.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse that studies social power and social change text and talk in political and social contexts. Van Dijk (1993) states: Critical Discourse Analysis “is not a homogenous model, nor a school or a paradigm, but at most a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis.”

Furthermore, critical discourse analysis contributes to vital social research focusing on discourse and other social elements as power relations, ideologies, and social identities (Fairclough, 2012.) Further, Alexander (2014) points out that ideology is “a view about what ought to be ought, said, and done about politics in terms of the sole criterion” (p. 12.) Moreover, there is the feminist ideology which has often been misrepresented by arguments such as every woman in politics has to be supported by other women and that every woman who ever mentioned other women in politics is a feminist (Zarkov, 2017.) Under CDA, there is an interdisciplinary nature in which it aims to study the logical relations between the text and outside the text that may be hidden and needs to be revealed.

This research aims at giving a critical discourse analysis of selected texts of the speech of one of the most prominent figures of Saudi women: HRH Princess Reema Bint Bandar Al Saud. She is the first woman ambassador in the Kingdom's history. She was assigned as an ambassador in 2019, becoming the first Saudi woman to be honored with this position with ministerial ranking. As a graduate of George Washington University, she has been serving effectively and passionately in both public and private sectors of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, working toward achieving noticeable success in supporting the concept of Saudi women’s empowerment. This paper focuses on both the rhetoric and the persuasive patterns based on the linguistic structures proposed by Van Dijk’s theory and Norman Fairclough’s reflections on Ideology. The research aims at identifying the linguistic strategies as well as the discursive strategies and how they are conducted by HRH Princess Reema Bint Bander.

This paper hypothesizes the following:

1. There are specific linguistic and stylistic patterns in the speech of HRH Princess Reema that make her address sound persuasive, and, hence make her an excellent example of the concept of Saudi woman empowerment.
2. There are specific linguistic markers in the address of HRH Princess Reema, which refer to the themes of Conservatism, Socialism, and Liberalism feminist ideologies. These are very connected with redefining Saudi women’s understanding of leadership and empowerment.
3. This paper answers the following questions:
   1. What are the linguistic and stylistic patterns in the speech of HRH Princess Reema that make her speech sounds persuasive?
2. What are the persuasive strategies in the speech of HRH Princess Reema which refer to social themes and ideologies?

Review of literature

Saudi Arabia has witnessed the development of many political, economic, and social changes that have affected both the national and the international status of Saudi women. These transformations have led to the emergence of new practices of social relations related to women. The concept of women's empowerment has received increasing attention from the Saudi government and has led to an increase in Saudi women's involvement in all areas of public life. The term ‘empowerment’ refers to women empowerment in contemporary societies where it becomes related to various important topics of discussion, especially in the fields of development and economics.

Furthermore, it is essential to mention that this topic has been dealt with and introduced from different social and cultural perspectives. Many previous studies that introduced the idea of ‘women empowerment.’ Some studies have examined the idea of women’s empowerment in leadership roles in Higher Education. Other studies have investigated the same concept of women’s empowerment to identify women’s abilities to make economic decisions by paying further attention to the social mobility of Saudi women aligned with Vision (2030). The following paragraphs will detail these studies’ approaches and their findings.

Under the umbrella of Vision 2030, many researchers have emphasized the importance of empowering Saudi women in Saudi society. Abalkhail (2017) confirmed many changes to enable Saudi women to participate in their community, such as providing equal opportunities in education, and employment to both genders. Alqahtani (2020) mentioned that one of the most important goals of Vision 2030 is empowering Saudi women by providing them with the most recommended skills required by different job markets. These skills aim at preparing Saudi women to participate in Saudi communities and qualify them to get prestigious degrees in higher education which lead them to higher positions in both governmental and private sectors.

On the other hand, Alotaibi (2020) introduced a study in which he claimed that the role of women in leadership positions in Higher Education demonstrates the fact that Saudi women have not been effectively empowered. This study aimed at investigating the factors which can be considered as barriers for Saudi women in getting assigned to leadership positions in Saudi higher education institutions as supposed to be aligned with the vision 2030. The study adopted a qualitative research method. The data sample included both males and females working as leaders in three Saudi higher education universities. The researcher implemented a structured interview as a research instrument. Study findings revealed that there are some barriers hinder Saudi women from being assigned to leadership positions. These challenges can be classified as institutional, cultural, and personal barriers. The study concluded its discussion by giving some suggestions to reform Saudi women’s status to overcome these obstacles to participate effectively and fulfill their significant roles in leading the country to attain its prosperous goals.

Furthermore, a descriptive study was conducted by Elshafey (2020), who supported Saudi women in 2030 vision. This study aims at identifying the trends of women leaders by giving more attention to the social mobility of Saudi women concerning Vision 2030.
sample consisted of 53 single female leadership from the Northern Frontier University. Their ages were between 30-50 years old. The surveys are used as a research instrument. The focus of this study is to determine women’s contribution to educational development based on graduate qualifications which prepare Saudi women to meet the needs of the labor market in Saudi Arabia. The findings confirmed that there is not a significant difference in the attitudes of women leaders in the dimensions of social mobility of Saudi women regarding vision (2030).

Another study was approached by Alyami (2016), who applied a descriptive research method to investigate the reasons behind having Saudi women fewer work opportunities and the low-income than their Saudi male counterparts. The study implemented a survey as a research instrument, in which the sample covered 143 Saudi women who belong to different social classes. The quantitative results confirmed that Saudi women who belong to low-income social class suffer because they have not received graduate degrees. Hence, this leads to a lack of employment opportunities. The results proved that there are further social and cultural factors that have unescapable effects on Saudi women’s job opportunities.

Further, learning and mastering foreign languages (especially English) by Saudi Women can also affect their chances of getting empowered. One study relates this to the proficiency level of the English language. Mohammadian (2018) confirmed in her descriptive study that the English language proficiency level has a tremendous effect on empowering women in senior jobs, which require an increased sense of responsibility and commitment. English language proficiency level is essential for empowering women to earn higher salaries. The purpose of this research was to examine the role of language proficiency in empowering women in general. The sample included 30 female students. The survey is used as a research instrument and was composed of 11 statements. The findings revealed that a high level of English language proficiency qualifies Saudi women to earn financial, social, and professional empowerment which consequently increases their confidence and job opportunity.

Another related study is tackled by Riedy (2013), who conducted a descriptive study that aimed at investigating how learning the English language can help in empowering women in Saudi Arabia. Saudi women strive to learn English to get higher educational degrees and prestigious jobs. The research included 68 Saudi female participants. All of them work in different sectors in Saudi Arabia. The survey was used as a research instrument. The findings revealed that learning the English language enhances Saudi women’s empowerment by helping her to make decisions, strengthen her friendships, and use English informally to increase her confidence and proficiency.

Nowadays, Saudi women play a vital role in their community development as they are responsible for such development like Saudi men. In Saudi society, women face many challenges that prevent them from achieving their goals. Saudi women are being supported to have equal opportunities by empowering them alongside Saudi men in all aspects of life. For many Saudis, the year (2017) is regarded as the year of empowering Saudi women. In (2018), Saudi women were allowed to drive and get their driving training and licenses for the first time in Saudi history. This was followed by the issuing and implementation of harassment law, which grants women a sense of comfort and security. Furthermore, their roles were strengthened by deciding to start teaching physical education (sports) to girls in schools and allowing families to get access
to football matches, as well as allowing Saudi women to participate in the Olympic Games internationally. This research focuses on the concept of Saudi women’s empowerment. It gives a critical discourse analysis of the speech of HRH Reema Bint Bander, who represents a perfect model of the idea of Women’s Empowerment.

**Methodology**

The empowerment of women has become an essential topic of discussion in development and economics. Economic empowerment allows women to control and benefit from resources, assets, and income. It also helps in the ability to manage risks and improve women's well-being. It can lead to a trivial approach to gender support in a particular political or social context. While it is often used interchangeably, the more inclusive concept of gender empowerment concerns people of any gender, emphasizing the distinction between biological and gender as a role. Empowering women helps to advance the status of women through literacy, education, training, and awareness creation (Alvarez, 2013.) Furthermore, women's empowerment refers to a woman's ability to make strategic life choices that she was previously denied (Deneulin & Lila Shahani, 2009.)

Empowerment is defined, for example, as

- a multidimensional social process that helps people develop the power to use in their lives, communities, and society, a strength-based framework through which it presents a deconstruction and yet the levels of force used to consolidate that framework; Empowerment is a multidimensional and interdependent process of change in power relations” (Hadad, 2018, p.11.)

- Strength within: empowering women to examine and express their collective interests, organize to achieve them and link with other women's and men's organizations for change;
- Control: changing the underlying inequalities of power and resources constrain women’s aspirations and ability to achieve them.

This paper adopts a qualitative method based on observations and interpretations of selected public speech of HRH Princess Reema. As for the data of this research, it is collected through a primary data source. It is obtained from video clips of HRH Princess Reema’s public speech in Arabic and English. Data has been transcribed and, if needed, translated from Arabic into English. Data of this research is examined and analyzed according to two essential theories mentioned earlier: Critical Discourse Analysis of Van Dijk (CDA), and the theory of Norman Fairclough of Ideology Reflections. In his 1992 publication “Discourse and Social Change,” three-dimensional discourse analysis methods were included: Text Analysis, Discursive Practices, and Social Practices. Data is analyzed in systemic approaches to answer the research questions mentioned above.

**Research Procedures**

Data of this study is taken from three interviews done with HRH Princess Reema Bint Bander. Two of these interviews were between 2015 and 2017 before being assigned as an ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the United States. The third interview was done in 2020, in which she focused on the concept of Saudi women empowerment and 2030 Saudi Vision. These
interviews were taken from YouTube, and then transcribed and analyzed following a linguistic and thematic critical discourse analysis. The following are links to these interviews under study:


Findings

The speech of HRH Princess Reema is analyzed according to the Fairclough model, considering the following levels:

1. Textual level (Linguistic tools)
2. Rhetorical strategies (Discursive practices)
3. Social Practices (Potential to change)

Analysis of research data focuses on the following:

1. The Persuasive and rhetoric strategies that HRH Princess Reema applied in her address indicate that her speech focused on Saudi women empowerment as the main topic which she continuously supports and, consequently, being manifested as a model.

2. The themes that HRH Princess Reema focused on, such as socialism, conservatism and liberalism feminist ideology, are related to her background circumstances and ideology.

Persuasive linguistic techniques in Princess’s Reema speech

Repetitions & alliterations

Among the techniques to persuade the audience and influence them is the usage of repetitions, and alliteration words and phrases. Haliday and Hasan (1976) mention that lexical repetition plays an essential role in arranging text cohesiveness, in which the linguistic markers agree with words and paragraphs so the whole text will be successfully understood. Furthermore, Beeston (1893) states that synonyms or antonyms repetition is evidence for the writer’s creativity. The following table shows the most common words that are constantly repeated in HRH speech, and they are significantly related to the theme of this paper, “Women Empowerment.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key words</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladies</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the repetition of phrases, the following schedule gives examples of how specific terms are repeated successfully and spontaneously in HRH speech to support and validate her ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrases</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We still need women to...</td>
<td><em>Today, regardless of how many women we would like to involve; we still need women to train women. We still need women to train the trainers of those women.</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>We need women to occupy and work in the facilities, whether it is from the actual technical capability of the sport through to the support system of that sport.</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>You have to be honest with yourself, and you have to admit your shortcomings. You</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You have to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Interview 1.</th>
<th>Interview 2.</th>
<th>Interview 3.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WE</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOU</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUR</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHE</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HER</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pronouns (inclusive language)**

Critical discourse analysis, according to Bulan and Kasman (2018), may include parts of speech such as pronoun, power relations, and other implicatures. HRH Princess Reema’s speech showed a reflection of many variations of personal pronouns such as a first person, second person, and third-person pronouns. The following table illustrates the types of pronouns found in HRH speech and the frequency of usages.

Table 3. Numbers of pronouns used by HRH Princess Reema

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WE</td>
<td>We are, the kingdom is investing 10s of billions in a strategic education reform initiative, billions more in the curriculum reform and teacher training. And we're opening ourselves up to the world through the establishment of a national tourism industry. Vision 2030 is not just about the future of Saudi Arabia, it's also about the betterment of the planet. We believe that Saudi global leadership can bring people together, make a stand for tolerance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We're investing in and leading efforts to promote moderation and tolerance through initiatives such as the global center for combating extremist ideology, because we're in a desert, we recognize that we need to do a better job of correcting an inaccurate and distorted narrative. So, when we're labeled an extremist, we need to remind people that Saudi Arabia does not tolerate extremism within our borders or anywhere else in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We are the United States strongest, most reliable partner against extremism. Together, we go after the men, the money and the mindset that supports terrorism and extremism.

when we're labeled an extremist, we need to remind people that Saudi Arabia does not tolerate extremism within our borders or anywhere else in the world. We are the United States strongest, most reliable partner against extremism. Together, we go after the men, the money and the mindset that supports terrorism and extremism.

**Metaphors**

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) defined metaphors as a device of imagination for poetic purposes in which language in its basic form is used to imply another thing simultaneously. Furthermore, Searle, (1990), mentioned that in most cases, metaphors shouldn’t be explained, especially when the similarities between two entities are apparent. Then, further explanations will ruin the essence of metaphors. The following are examples of the metaphors found in HRH speech quoted from the three interviews under investigation.

- And she was coming in with maybe three weeks experience, no training and being thrown to the wolves.
- And I actually go to the edge of the world and everyone that visits me in Saudi, I almost drag them out there because it is one of the most beautiful locations you could imagine particularly at sunset.
- And from that moment on, I've been all hands on deck.

**Inversion**

The use of the inversion technique is one of the persuasive devices that HRH Princess Reema frequently applied in her speech to influence the audience and explain her points vividly and clearly. It is a stylistic strategy in which the speaker plays skillfully with words for the sake of controlling and convincing the listener. The following are some examples of inversion in which HRH Princess Reema starts with informative statements and ends up with some enforcement phrases to have such effects on the audience.

- You want us to engage… forcing us to engage by blocking us from engagement in sports activities is not the way to go.
- Because I think, a little bit out of the box, and a little bit of a weird corner was Guinness, I was like Guinness, maybe we break a record, what do we do with these records? And then we started going through the book.
- don't compare, don't compare? Yeah. Because if you compare, you're actually going to find something that's going to make you miserable. You can be happy anywhere, you could be miserable anywhere.

**Appeal**

The appeal is a persuasive strategy directed mainly to the listeners’ emotions. Sometimes, appeals play a vital role in contentious debates. The most known and applicable kinds of appeals are those to feelings and those to authorities. Aristotle considered ‘appeal’ as a persuasive strategy in which he points out three different types of “appeal”:

- Appeal to logic, (logos)
- Appeal to emotions, (pathos)
• Appeal to the perceived character, (ethos) (Russell, 1982).

The following table illustrates the types of ‘appeal’ used and applied by HRH Princess Reema which, is mainly directed to the emotions of the listeners and labeled as follows:

Table 5. Types of appeal: A persuasive technique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Appeal</th>
<th>Examples quoted from HRH speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Sense</td>
<td>Today, regardless of how many women we would like to involve, we still need women to train women, we still need women to train the trainers of those women. We need women to occupy and work in the facilities, whether it is from the actual technical capability of the sport all the way through to the support system of that sport. And the sensitive subject of gyms. *And it is what I was doing before I took the role at the General Sports Authority is educating women on the value of saving their money of focusing on their health. Because every dollar you spend on your health or Riyadh is real, you are not saving for your future. Assess where you would like to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>*Imagine the value and the movement of sports to the soul of a young child. So when we say women must be involved in sports is because we need their daughters involved in sports, they must have that same community connection that our young boys have today. *Give me the quality material you give a man and what I'd like to have in the sports world across the world, not just in Saudi, the gender neutrality and product and the gender neutrality of facilities and the gender neutrality of machines and tools give us the option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Values</td>
<td>*The value the extreme value of sports in daily life for young children, for men and for women is to create that second sense of community. Today, we live in a disconnected society. We are online, we're on Twitter, we're on Facebook, we are closer to these machines than we are to the people in the room with us. *That is the investment that makes the mother the Father, the Son and the daughter speak the same language. And we say have a conversation at the dinner table. I would like to invite you all today, when you're at the dinner table, turn your phones over, have a conversation with your children. *So we're at school, they are within the family construct as a foundation, because that is where you learn your values. And once you learn the baseline of value, you begin to differentiate are the values that my family gave me impactfully 100%, what I want, or do I need to shift and add more?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgia</td>
<td>My mother, my father, my grandmother, my aunts, they were not, they don't know Twitter, they don't know Twitter. My mother knows WhatsApp, she WhatsApp says regularly. But she is not on Twitter. She speaks she speaks to her sisters, she speaks to us. And the conversations we have with my mother and father are conversations that, frankly, are not the same quality that I have with my children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotism</td>
<td>In Saudi, we've tagged it as 14 billion. All we need is for people to be engaged. So us as the Sports Authority, anybody that will listen to me any sports industry, in professional that will listen to me I keep telling them do not think of the Muslim, woman as an exclusively Arab woman. *The concept of financial self-sufficiency is so profoundly important that that is the only way that as a nation, we will survive and then as an individual that we will survive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy &amp;</td>
<td>*As I get older that I wish I'd listened more I wish I asked more. But the role models that we actually need today are people that are not on television that are people that are not on the radio or not on Instagram, it's people that have actually achieved or accomplished something. Because that role model has to show you through success or failure, how they've gotten to where they are, and they also need to have a value system, I find that we are lost track of the values that make us who we are, we have lost track of the essence of what is native to our nation, where are they? Where are the line these bad? No, we go back to the society or we</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 13. Number 1. March 2022
A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Speech of Her Royal Highness Princess Reema Alsoraihi
Anecdotes
One of the persuasive devices that have been found in HRH Princess Reema’s speech is using anecdotes as giving examples of her life experience in supporting the concept of women’s empowerment. Anecdotes can be defined as a short and amusing story with a point of view. The following examples are some of the anecdotes found in the data of this paper and have strong relevance to the concept of Saudi women empowerment.

- I was the CEO of the company, the experience that I had walking through the halls of the store that there was not one woman on the field, which basically means in sales, three floors, over 75 employees, not one woman selling luxury goods to women.
- I was approached by Ashlag Magnus daughter, she has a phenomenal website called Tinker Tailor. And Tinker Tailor wanted to come to Saudi and just in full disclosure, not only am I an investor, but I’m also on the board of advisors. And she wanted to come to Saudi and introduced the concept of Tinker Tailor to the Middle East. And so we invited her and the brand that she brought with her was Mark Aiza. And Karen Greg came out with her. And I've been to many events where you go to somebody’s home and they bring a trunk show or you go to a store and it is profoundly boring. So what we thought was how do we do this with a little bit of sense of humor, a little bit of fun. And I actually go to the edge of the world and everyone that visits me in Saudi, I almost drag them out there because it is one of the most beautiful locations you could imagine particularly at sunset.
- And two days after one of my dearest friends was diagnosed with breast cancer and called in, let me know, and I decided that was a big sign that this might be something I need to participate in

Rhetorical questions
Schippa (2007), identified five ways of using rhetoric. Among these ways is “rhetoric a persuasive technique” In analyzing the speech of HRH Princess Reema, it has been found that she made use of a lot of rhetorical questions which were followed either by herself answering these questions or by being left to the common sense of the audience. Using such a persuasive strategy in public speaking helps the speaker to draw the listener’s attention to the topic being discussed. Princess Reema’s rhetorical questions manifest clearly and enthusiastically her support to the concept of women empowerment and Saudi women issues in general. The following are examples of her frequent use of rhetorical questions:

- But today I’d like to ask how many more ways could we find to contour the face of a woman?
- How many of you today are sitting here watching me speak through a lens that's in front of you?
- What do you think is going to be more attractive?
- So how comfortable will the young Saudi girl be to document her physical fitness routines and activities and exhibit them to the world to see to follow her path?
- And what is the difference between the Nike hijab and the other ones that you have seen, perhaps? And what is the difference, you might say
between a girl just wearing a long sleeve t shirt versus something that's specifically made for her?

- Where are they? Where are the line these bad? No, we go back to the society or we find them in the media.
- It comes from experience and knowledge and engagement; you begin to see how others behave and you think Is this the way I would like to behave?
- You're suddenly pandering, or you've suddenly lost your weight? Well, no, I haven't.
- How many of you today are having the same conversation with people that you've had for the past 10 years? How many of you dread the moment that you see those people? Because it is the same? Wouldn't it be interesting if rather than dreading your moment with them, you say How about we change the conversation? How about it? How about we bring something new to the table?
- How do we do that? When we went to work, we implemented sweeping changes to our businesses and economic strategies across all sectors and all levels of the economy.
- We also asked ourselves if we want to create a more equitable, more inclusive society, where everyone is welcome where everyone can be a meaningful participant where everyone can prosper, satisfy their ambitions and utilize their talents. How do we do it?
- And then you sit and think, wait a minute, I'm in Saudi, how the heck am I going to do this?
- Am I ignorant enough to think that there will be people that are opposed to this?
- So this is the location? No, it's true,

Thematic data analysis

Conservative ideology

Conservative ideology, in its simplest definition, means following one’s traditions and values. This type of tradition represents religion and one’s own beliefs. Discussing faith in Saudi Arabia is considered one of the absolute truths that cannot be argued about. HRH Princess Reema constantly refers to Saudi society as a very conservative one with its own values and ultimate privacy. An example of this can be seen in her following speech where she is discussing Saudi women’s health and sports issues:

- If you really want to consider our community, it is a very closed and private community and talking about specific body parts are taboo. And that goes not only for breast cancer, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, it's very difficult conversations to have and difficult words to say in public. So not only is it a difficult conversation, to have the method that we need to educate the women on for early detection is an uncomfortable conversation to have in other words, to check yourself, check yourself.

- What I think is missing is and this is perhaps the right or wrong platform to challenge the global fitness community to create a product that allows for a young Muslim, or a young
conservative woman to be able to practice her sport, where she can stay modest, but still feel comfortable going out and participating engaging.

- I don't mean conservative of left, right or any other. I just mean a community that prefers to be a little bit more modest in the way that they engage. But give me more opportunity. Give me the quality material you give a man and what I'd like to have in the sports world across the world, not just in Saudi, the gender neutrality and product and the gender neutrality of facilities and the gender neutrality of machines and tools give us the option. Changes that not just transform laws and government policies, but also social norms, cultural behaviors, changes that require national commitment and secure buy in from citizens who hand in hand with the government share the responsibility for implementing these reforms and making this transformation.

Socialism ideology

Socialism is different in connotation and functions from Conservatism. In fact, Socialism is a mid-way between liberalism and conservatism. It is a social and an economic philosophy in which the social system is characterized by social ownership such as workers’ self-management, equity, and other features. HRH Princess Reema’s speech identifies some of these features in which there is a clear emphasis on these features such as “centralized planning, freedom of consumption, pricing process and planning). The following are some examples of this ideology she embraces.

- So what we decided to do, and it was imperative for me was to create an environment where these women felt comfortable and confident coming to work. So we have to work on them first. And once they were stable and comfortable in the situation of the work environment, we could then focus on the benefit to the store. And when you actually really look at it, having a confident employee that feels safe and stable and respected. That in and of itself is a boon for your business.
- I also don't agree with the fact that you should eliminate all men for the benefit of women that's not healthy community, from my point of view,
- We believe that Saudi global leadership can bring people together, make a stand for tolerance, encourage interfaith dialogue, embrace cooperation between Christian Jewish and Muslim communities, and encourage the Muslim community’s responsibility to deter animosity and violence.

Feminist ideology

Feminist ideology focuses on insights that are related to issues such as power and the ideology of gendered social patterns. It is an ideology that aims at examining “the complex, subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and homogenous power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated and challenged in different contexts and communities” (Lazar, 2007, p. 147). The following are examples from HRH’s speech in which she constantly focuses on gender as an ideological structure and social practice. Her vision of “Women Empowerment” is frequently present in her speech and social practice even before the emergence of Saudi Vision 2030.

- We began feminizing the workplace through the back office from our marketing department logistics we had women in the accounting, and we moved into the buying and
the marketing offices. Slowly as we studied the laws, we realized that there are vacancies for women in the non defined roles.

- Today, regardless of how many women we would like to involve, we still need women to train women, we still need women to train the trainer's of those women. We need women to occupy and work in the facilities, whether it is from the actual technical capability of the sport all the way through to the support system of that sport.
- We hope that people are able to see a remarkable progress that women now have private and public sector leadership positions, that women's participation and empowerment is a driving force in the nation's workplace, that the creative arts and entertainment are flourishing, pushing the boundaries of expression challenging what was acceptable, that cinemas and theaters are opening concerts and performances with international entertainers occurring and street festivals taking place all over the country.

Data findings

The data is analyzed based on the linguistic features used to achieve persuasion means of Aristotle's categorization of ethos, logos, and pathos in the characters' arguments regarding WE. The thematic analysis revealed two remarkable themes, which are women empowerment and persuasive strategies. In her speech, Princess Reema supported women's future in the workforce by using repetition for pathos strategy after questioning economic cities and job creation. Her linguistic expressions inspired the listeners and further, clarified family members' considerations in the future, including Saudi women. She answered, "that is the integration of the men and the woman, the husband, the father and the daughter".

Furthermore, Princess Reema emphasized the Saudi women's value in the community through repetition, which produces pathos, as she mentioned; "there's value in the woman there is value in her contribution to the community, there's value to her voice and the decisions that she helps make." Also, the Princess stressed in her explanation regarding Saudi's reforms by a combination of pathos and ethos through repeating the same concept and using the pronouns "I" and exclusive "we" to refer to herself and the government. She used various persuasive tools in her utterance to make it clear and compelling; she said, "I will remind you what I remind them, we are not working for anyone outside of this nation, we're working for this nation, for the women of our nation, for the men of our nation, for the evolution of where we need to be."

Moreover, in a talk regarding women's futures, Princess Reema discussed job opportunities for women by applying pathos and ethos. She used a rhetorical question, besides the exclusive "we" that refers to herself and the sports sector as she said, "Why? because we'd like to promote small and micro businesses for physical fitness.". In this discussion, the Princess shared her efforts and experience with the audience, reflecting positively on her ethos. Also, Princess Reema talked about women's future and productivity after the driving ban through pathos and the use of a rhetorical question to stress her argument. In her interview, she said, "but what does that also mean? Now it means there's no more excuse for lack of productivity. A woman today can't say, I couldn't find a car, I couldn't find a driver ". Princess Reema also expressed her defense for the Saudi community, including women, by applying ethos and pathos through two rhetorical questions with the exclusive "we". The Princess's language had a powerful impact on her discussion, expressing responsibility and personal involvement as a part
of Saudi community. She mentioned, "do you say that to anyone else? is it because we're in the Middle East and there's a history of what you did not feel assimilated to your values?".

Additionally, Princess Reema used the audience's language through an idiomatic expression that expresses pathos to clarify her point during her talk about gender equality for Saudi women. According to what she said in her interview, "because it will target human rights and get them off our backs.". Besides, Princess Reema discussed the Saudi reforms and WE by using metaphor, simile, and direct address to the audience in one utterance, which are parts of pathos said "Don't just look at us as oil and don't look at us as the building, and the construction is the concrete… that is the new oil human" as she draws pictures by words to adopt specific ideas or change preconceived stereotypes about Saudi people, especially, Saudi women.

Further, Princess Reema promoted her ethos and expressed her caring towards women in her talk about laws regarding women's gyms in Saudi by mentioning her efforts and experience. The Princess positioned herself automatically along with the use of exclusive "we" referring to herself and her team in the sports sector; she said, "We worked on changing the laws to allow for women's gyms to be legal." Also, the Princess used ethos and logos in one utterance to create a significant impact on her image and support her argument regarding women's achievement by telling her experience that comes from her investigation and views. She used the pronoun "I", automatic positioning, and numbers in her utterance "When I was hired, I was the only woman in an office of 1,800 people, a year and a half out right now, my team is made up of men and women, but 27 women work within the two groups that I'm responsible for". Likewise, she used the same combination of ethos and logos through numbers and exclusive "we" in her discussion about creating women's jobs "was 500 registers on the digital site that we created, 47 immediately went live". She appeals to logos to prove the immediate job impact discussed in her utterance and support women's futures.

In a discussion about gender equality, Princess Reema accomplished ethos through the exclusive "we" to refer to herself and the government, with interactive positioning because she spoke for the government "we're doing it because A it's the right thing to do, B it is necessary for our nation." Also, the Princess positioned herself interactively with Saudi women and their achievement by using exclusive "we" in a collective way along with the use of the pronoun "I" that expresses her opinion" we've been there, where we have been through, is the silent partner, and today I think we are given the opportunity and a platform to be more present and more relevant." Her utterance affects her ethos as she spoke up for Saudi women and expressed her consideration and care towards them. Besides that, Princess Reema applied ethos in her discussion of Saudi women's contribution through exclusive "we" that referred to the speaker and the Saudi women which expressed a sense of solidarity; she said, "those of you who work with the universities and the medical centers you know us we exist. " In this discussion, she positioned herself interactively because she spoke for Saudi women. Besides, after a question about what the opportunities are for women, Princess Reema supported her answer by ethos and logos by mentioning her experience in the job creation plan that has been carried out in cooperation with the ministry of labor in response to women's futures. She applied the exclusive "we" that referred to herself and the ministry of labor with positioning herself reflexively; the Princess mentioned, "what we did was create 25 new line items for jobs for women."
Conclusion

This study chose to explore the language of a female who promoted the rights of women in Saudi Arabia: HRH Princess Reema Bint Bander. Moreover, it focuses not only on her speech but also on her attitudes towards Saudi woman empowerment and her achievements. Thus, her attitudes have a significant impact on defending and supporting women’s rights in Saudi Arabia. Besides her language, she motivated Saudi women to be informed of their rights and work positively for the prosperity of their own country. The concept of Women’s Empowerment has emerged as one of the most critical concerns not only at a community level but also at the international level. Governments worldwide are making extra efforts to attain gender equality and equal pay in all fields of life. However, governmental efforts alone will not be enough to achieve this purpose. Communities, too, need to take necessary actions to create a safe environment in which there is no gender discrimination and where women have equal opportunities in participating in governmental political and economic roles equally. While the welfare approach stressed on the importance of women as wives, mothers, and careers of family welfare, the anti-poverty strategy was built on two strategies—need for recognizing women’s participation in family income paid and unpaid works. Thus, nations worldwide have recognized the importance of mobilizing the power of women and giving them financial support through economic projects and income independence. This planning strategy enables women to enjoy their equal position in their community by making sure that such plans will enhance women’s roles in both household and careers goals. Now, Saudi women’s empowerment is on a broad and growing scale, which is seen as a step toward better development.

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References
Alqahtani, A. (2020). ‘Barriers to Women’s Education: Participation in Adult
A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Speech of Her Royal Highness Princess Reema Alsoraihi


Appendix

The following are links to these interviews under study:


Anti-Essentialist Culture Conception for Better Intercultural Language Teaching in EFL Contexts

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Abstract
Culture is a crucial facet in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Hence, we shall in this paper discuss the theories underpinning this concept and how we can utilize these epistemological and ontological understandings to promote the TEFL field and the higher education task. Henceforward, we have answered the following question: How to move from the essentialist view of culture to the non-essentialist view of culture, and why it is essential to do so in 21st century English as a Foreign Language context? To answer the proposed question, we have discussed the essentialist and non-essentialist dichotomy of the culture concept and how both frameworks affect TEFL and intercultural language teaching (ILT) differently. In this regard, we aim to help EFL policymakers, EFL teachers, and students alike shift their attention towards the merits of adopting a non-essentialist understanding of the culture concept in the ILT. First, this article covers the theories of culture to understand this concept from different anthropological perspectives. Second, we relied on Byram's Model (1997) critiques to demonstrate how a misunderstanding of culture as a concept can be damaging. Third, after critically discussing the relevant literature, we recommended an anti-culturalist perspective in the EFL context to improve the ILT experience. This article concludes with recommendations for EFL and ELT policymakers and EFL teachers and students alike. The proposals mainly focus on shifting the attention towards a non-culturalist approach towards culture.

Keywords: Culture theories, English language teaching, English as a foreign language, intercultural communicative competence, global citizenship education, Byram's Model

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Introduction

In the current globalized world, English has become a lingua franca. As a response, it called for the internalization of higher education to cope with the dramatically changing global academic environment. The foreign language teaching field has witnessed a fair share of alterations. Indeed, nowadays, an essential aim of English language teaching in the EFL context is to train EFL learners to communicate effectively and appropriately in English. Hence, this dictates a need for innovative and adequate pedagogical approaches in the EFL classroom to remain on the same page with the complex necessities of today's world. To respond to such a need, researchers around the globe shifted their attention towards the integration of cultural and intercultural dimensions in foreign language education. It has become evident that being fluent in English is no longer the goal, but rather, how not to be a fluent fool (Bennett, 1997). In other words, how to use English appropriately according to context and purpose. (Byram, 1997) In that respect, Byram works in 1997 and 2008, as well as Kramsch (1995), Corbett (2003) and Deardorff (2006) works, and many others, expanded different theoretical frameworks for the integration of culture and intercultural language teaching in the FL education since the 1990s, to equip learners with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes "to interact effectively with people of cultures other than one's own." (Byram, 2000, 297)

In the same vein, a significant issue prevailing in cultural and intercultural studies, since pre-post modernism in the late 20th century, is defining the culture concept and how such conceptualization can affect the intercultural language teaching process. On this premise, this article will first lay down the theories of culture its related epistemological and ontological understandings. Second, we shall provide an example of how a misunderstanding of culture in intercultural language teaching can affect the entire process. Third, we will discuss what an EFL practitioner may consider following as an anthropological trend to conceptualize the concept of culture and ground their experimental teaching. Considering these critical discussions, we shall conclude the article by providing solutions and future recommendations. Therefore, in the present paper, we will address one central question: How to move from the essentialist view of culture to the non-essentialist view of culture, and why it is essential to do so in the 21st century EFL context?

Theoretical background

Theories of Culture

One of the difficulties we EFL practitioners encounter is defining concepts such as culture. (Geertz, 1973) The literature offers a variety of definitions of culture since there is no consensus definition of this concept. As Morillas (2001) has asserted,

"the major stumbling block for success in culture teaching theory and practice and progress in this area of applied linguistics has been the very notion of culture. But this pervasive presence is precisely what makes the concept of culture nearly unmanageable. (p. 297)"

Thus, we shall discuss the anthropological theories of culture and make our way through the interrelation between cultural concepts and how it dictates our intercultural language teaching.

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Thus, we shall discuss the anthropological theories of culture and make our way through the interrelation between cultural concepts and how it dictates our intercultural language teaching.
Rohner (1984) has put forward the split views in the conception of culture, wherein anthropologists fall into two main categories: behavioural and ideational theorists. Apart from the few agreements between these two distinctive theories, such as the agreement that culture is the primary and central concept of their science and that it is a learned phenomenon (Rohner, 1984), countless contentions points exist. Nonetheless, we will focus mainly on the behavioural theory of culture concept as it serves the best needs of the present paper.

Two groups emerged in the school of behavioural anthropologists, mainly driven apart by their perceptions of culture's ontological reality. To begin with, cultural realists argue that culture has a concrete reality: it exists sui generis. In contrast, cultural nominalism designates those who hold that culture holds no ontological reality; it is mainly an abstraction by man; it exists as a set of abstractions made by the investigator and drawn from observable uniformities in behaviour sequences within a population. (Rohner, 1984)

Aside from this debate vis-à-vis the substantive nature of culture, Keesing (1974) has put forward three different ways ideational anthropologists approached the concept of culture up to the 1970s. These include cognitive anthropology, structuralist anthropology, and symbolic anthropology.

Symbolic anthropology, also referred to as interpretive anthropology, was followed in the 1980s by the national-driven conceptualization of culture. The shift towards postmodernism in the social sciences allowed the critical research approaches to refute the national-driven conceptualization of culture in the mid-1990s as it was too vague, inaccurate, and inconsistent with Academia.

Thus, this essentially leads us to the "essentialist view of culture" and the "non-essentialist view of culture" dichotomy.

**Essentialists vs Non-Essentialists Overview**

Essentialists, also known as culturalists, and non-essentialists, referred to as non-culturalists, perceive cultural concepts differently. For essentialists, culture is deemed a homogeneous group that is bound, static, and holistic, wherein diversities between people, time, and space, are all neglected. Therefore, identity is permanent and fixed, reinforcing national stereotypes (Holliday, 2011; 2013) and cultural determinism based on behaviour. Albeit this determinist and national-driven conceptualization of culture was heavily criticized, scholars seem to still fall into this category unwillingly. According to Baumann (1996), despite scholars acknowledging diversities within nations, they are still bound to the fixed, determined cultural identity, contradictory and essentialist-like.

Non-essentialists, however, claimed that "cultural groups are always internally heterogeneous groups that embrace a range of diverse practices and norms that are often contested, change over time and are enacted by individuals in personalized ways". (Barrett et al., 2013, p. 13) This citation indicates the perceptions of non-culturalists that cultures are not homogeneous but rather heterogeneous, changing and dynamic. Barrett et al. (2013) also asserted,
All cultures are dynamic and constantly change over time due to political, economic, and historical events and developments resulting from interactions with and influences from other cultures. Cultures also change over time because of their members' internal contestation of their meanings, norms, values, and practices. (p. 15)

This quote seems keener to be used in cultural and intercultural studies. It acknowledges cultural diversity within a nation (Holiday, 2011) and rejects the notion that cultural identities are static, as argued by the essentialists. (Hall, 1996) Barrett et al. (2013) said that "all people belong simultaneously to and identify with many different cultures" (p. 14), which means cultural affiliations are dynamic and fluid as a response to people's changing perspectives over place and time.

What are the all "abouts" of foreign language teaching?

Before tackling the effects of the approach one takes to conceptualize culture and its impact on intercultural language teaching in the classroom, we first shall answer the following question: how can one define foreign language teaching and identify its aims in today's world? Kramsch (2009) answers in the goals of traditional language teaching have been found wanting in this new era of globalization. Its central tenets (monolingual native speakers, homogeneous national cultures, pure standard national languages, instrumental goals of education, functional criteria of success) have become problematic in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world. (p. 190)

We can grasp many understandings from this quote. First and foremost, it seems like English is now used by non-native speakers worldwide more than in native countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Moreover, this presents a question mark. We will come back to this soon. From this quote, we can also grasp that foreign language teaching is eventually about providing competent intercultural speakers that can communicate in this era of globalization and keep pace with the ongoing dramatic changes around the globe.

Additionally, Kramsch (1993) claimed that "culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one". (p. 1) This quote is open to different interpretations as well. However, the most important question regarding this saying is, what culture are we addressing here? Is it the native speaker's culture or the target language's? Either one, how do we pin down this "culture" to integrate it in the classroom? As we discussed earlier, culture is quite a vague term. What are the facets we should emphasize and deemphasize? Additionally, Berret et al. (2013) asserted earlier that people belong to different cultures simultaneously. We should address all these concerns shortly.

Byram's essentialist stance and how it backfired

To understand how the approach to conceptualizing culture affects intercultural language teaching, we shall take Byram's Model (1997) as an example. This Model is arguably one of the most used frameworks globally in ILT.
Byram’s Model

Michael Byram has designed an intercultural communicative competence model in 1997, which is arguably the most well-known ICC model around the globe. As Dasli (2011) stated, "One often-cited approach on which intercultural communication, as a discourse of tolerance and flexibility, is grounded was offered by Byram in 1997" (p. 26). Byram's famous ICC model was initially proposed for foreign language education for secondary school students to acquire ICC. However, a few years later, scholars and researchers also adopted it in the higher education context to adequately prepare university students for the 21st-century world. In that regard, many universities in Algeria emphasize Byram's Model (1997) in their EFL curriculum to train EFL secondary school teachers in their noble task of cultivating competent foreign language speakers. Byram's Model of ICC is a harmonizing Model as it has introduced a competence that was absent in its previous counterparts. (Hymes 1972; Halliday 1975; Van Ek, 1986) Byram's Model is essentially composed of the three competencies: communicative competence, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and finally, intercultural competence, which Byram (1997) introduced to move from the notion of the "native speaker" to the notion of the "intercultural speaker."

The explication of the five Savoirs in Byram's Model (1997) designates the qualities an intercultural speaker should possess. Additionally, it allows foreign language teachers to design their syllabus, plan their teaching, and assess the ICC development of their learners. The notion of ICC in the Model originates from the inseparable link between a set of qualities that allow students to function effectively in intercultural contact and maintain relationships with foreigners. These qualities range from tolerance and flexibility, as Dasli (2011) stated above, to relating and interpreting other cultures' conventions, as well as other skills, critical attitudes, and knowledge.

Intercultural competence comprises five distinctive savoirs, which Corbett (2003) declared as "the most fully worked-out specification of intercultural competence, which involves the kinds of knowledge and skills needed to mediate between cultures." These five savoirs include critical attitudes (savoir être), knowledge (savoir), skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre), skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire), critical cultural awareness, also known as political education (savoir s'engager)

Critiques of Byram's Model

Despite such a detailed account and significant impact on the FL and ELT field, criticism, rightfully, cease not to stop. Byram has followed the essentialist approach of culture conceptualization, which led to some critics. For instance, Dervin (2016) discussed the issues regarding the culture conceptualization in the savoirs (knowledge) in Byram's Model. This critique mainly emanated from Byram's association of the culture concept to the country concept in the description of this Savoir. As a result, this has ultimately led Byram (1997) into the national-driven conceptualization of culture, that very same one we critiqued and refuted earlier, and so did many other scholars. To illustrate, identifying individuals merely on their nationality is the determinism essentialist view that people have one fixed and permanent identity. This culturalist perspective can be damaging as individuals identify themselves according to different cultures, constantly changing, as discussed earlier.
Moreover, this certainly reinforces generalizations and stereotypes based on nationality. These perspectives damage the mission of global citizenship education; it defeats the entire purpose of the one « global village » wherein people are all equal. Nonetheless, one may also question the actual impact of artificial boundaries on the map, which supposedly separate people. Indeed, people of different nationalities are living all around the earth, and nationality in itself is a questionable identity affiliation in today's world. One may also raise the issue of the dominant and less dominant cultures within one nation, which the essentialist culture seems to dismiss.

Moreover, the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living Together As Equals in Dignity" (2008) has called for the task of "living together amid growing cultural diversity while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms has become one of the major demands of our times and is set to remain relevant for many years to come." (p. 51) Despite Byram's Model (1997) development with the Council of Europe's project to construct the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in the late 1990s, the original model framework does not abide by the later aims of the Council.

**Discussion**

**Adopting one of the Paradigms**

One of the main points we need to tackle in this article is the cultural conceptualization approach we recommend to EFL teachers and students and the reasons behind such preference. Byram's Model (1997) critique is exemplary that essentialism may lead to a determinist and static view of cultures, which we demonstrated before as a negative aspect of intercultural language teaching. Therefore, adopting such a perspective in one's teaching grounding may raise issues and concerns in today's society. That is to say, an essential part of developing intercultural competence requires learners and teachers to examine and challenge generalizations and stereotypes as research suggests that overcoming prejudice is a top priority for language learners. (Byram et al., 2002) To avoid bias and stereotypes, Byram and his colleagues (2002) suggested teachers tackle feelings and thoughts, as these stands are usually based on subjectivity rather than objectivity and rationale. However, if one decides to avoid the prejudice and stereotypes, as expected from teachers in today's world, which conceptualization of culture sounds more relevant and appropriate?

EFL teachers should consider a complex view of culture, wherein people are perceived to be diverse, and identities intersect all the time. Thus, the EFL students understand that ethnicity, culture, or nation does not determine one's behaviour or ideas, and vice-versa. This perspective avoids any prejudice, generalizations, or stereotyping of other people and cultures. Indeed, promoting intercultural speakers requires « a framework that allows for the expression of and recognition of cultural difference. These procedures should be based on human rights – equal dignity and equal rights. » (Byram et al., 2002)

We also recommend a non-national-driven conceptualization of culture. It does not contradict the inward aims of internalization of higher education and the main goals of global citizenship education. (Berrett et al., 2013) Training native English speakers like students is outdated; the current globalized world needs competent intercultural speakers that possess the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to live harmoniously with others in today's diverse world. This entails teaching students about global concerns such as racism, inequality, politics,
etc., which is crucial and mandatory. More importantly, teaching EFL students to look beyond country flags and skin shades is vital. People no longer necessarily affiliate solely with their nations but a range of other affiliations within the country. Anyhow, EFL students around the globe most certainly hold some responsibility for the current global issues, and they are expected to take part in solving them.

**How to Embrace Non-Essentialism?**

We shall now come back to the main research question that we raised earlier, "How do we approach culture concept from a non-essentialist view in the EFL context, and why is it important to do so in the 21st century EFL context?"

**Third Place and Non-Essentialism**

We have discussed above how globalization turned the tables. It seems like English is now used by non-native speakers worldwide more than native countries such as the US or UK, which may or may not detach it from the "English speaking countries" and turn it into a "public property". This is an issue as we need standards to make sense of the language and its related cultural contexts. Moreover, we also raised the issue of which culture we integrate and emphasize in the FL classroom since people are diverse within and out of nations.

We suggest that this is where non-essentialism culture conceptualization occurs and where the "Third place" by Kramsch (1993) can be handy. First, to make sense of the sociocultural contexts of the English language as a global lingua franca and detach it from the native speaking countries, culture as a concept is to be approached in a non-essentialist manner. Culture is dynamic and changing, and we should perceive English as a lingua franca this way in the foreign language classroom. We suggest relying on Kramsch's (1993) third intercultural language teaching and learning approach to achieve this. The third culture can be defined as an intercultural sphere where people from different cultural identities can bond and work together searching for a hybrid place. The third culture belongs neither to the learners' home culture nor the target language's culture. It is also noteworthy that cultural identity is not strictly limited to the home culture and the target language's culture, as this is an essentialist view of culture. Instead, as Berrett et al. (2013) argued, cultural identity can be compromised of multiple identities that an individual takes part in concomitantly. For instance, one can identify as a loving and caring husband at home, reserved and timid person at work, and perhaps risk-taker and adventurous in their friends' group.

**Teachers' Beliefs**

Since the third culture is an intercultural sphere characterized by diverse people, there are few prerequisites among the EFL learners and EFL teachers to utilize such an approach properly. First, there is a need for competent EFL teachers who are well-versed in intercultural studies and intercultural teaching. Several studies in the EFL context demonstrated EFL teachers' inabilities to identify the intercultural language teaching approach, how it is utilized, or how students can be assessed in ICC. (Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018; Mustapha 2014) We also need to raise EFL teachers' awareness of the anti-essentialist and essentialist views of culture as a concept -this article is our utmost endeavour to achieve that-. It is also essential to know that the concept of culture must be approached from a non-essentialist perspective in the third culture of Kramsch. (1993)
Exploring One’s Own Surroundings First

Nonetheless, the EFL students should possess critical attitudes such as tolerance, respect, and curiosity for the other peoples and cultures to participate in the third culture sphere. Additionally, EFL students should be motivated to learn about all people and cultures and not stick mainly to English native speaking countries such as the US and UK. One way to encourage the students to learn more about other cultures is by instilling interest in exploring the local cultures first in their surroundings, including people from other ethnicities, people from different jobs, different social classes, or simply people with a different set of beliefs. Students feel more open and encouraged to enroll in discussions with people they share some ordinary bounds with, such as nationality and language, then shift their attention towards foreigners.

Why are we recommending the Anti-Essentialist culture conception?

In short, here are some reasons why we should adopt the non-essentialist approach to culture conception and how it can enhance our intercultural language teaching.

Anti-Essentialism for better Intercultural Language Teaching

First, if we perceive culture as dynamic and ever-changing, we will get rid of both: teaching "culture as a body of factual knowledge," which Bouslama & Benaiissi (2018) tackled, and "teaching irrelevant and outdated cultural knowledge" which Mustapha (2014) argued. Non-essentialism entails that the culture is forever changing, and its people are diverse. Therefore, we cannot simply fill in our EFL students with a bulk of knowledge about a particular culture, as a) this knowledge will be irrelevant in a short period due to constant cultural change. And b) it would be generalized knowledge at the expense of the diversity within that culture. Therefore, we rely on promoting the attitudes, skills, and knowledge to guide our students towards autonomous foreign language learning.

Moreover, we have discussed the primary goal of teaching English as a foreign language and intercultural language teaching in today's world. In that respect, Byram and his colleagues (2002) argued that teachers are not mere professionals but are human beings, which means they have acquired a set of prejudices and stereotypes in the past, as any other human being. Additionally, teachers are most likely to be included and concerned in the classroom when cultural issues are debated. This is why the anti-essentialist view of culture enhances the quality of intercultural language teaching. Adopting this perspective, teachers become more cautious of their ideas influencing their teaching and how it affects the entire teaching process, including their students' development towards global citizens. Moreover, teachers become more aware of how they deal with and challenge their learners' prejudices in the classroom.

Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment

A prevalent issue in the ELT field is the assessment of intercultural communicative competence. As Mustapha (2014) has argued, evaluating EFL learners in ICC can be more complex than teaching the foreign language culture.

Adopting a non-essentialist view of culture aids the EFL teachers to assess their students ICC more accurately and consistently. The old fashioned native speaker ideal is now replaced by the intercultural speaker ideal, which is a far more reasonable and attainable goal. That is to say, in the native speaker model perspective, the EFL teachers assess the student according to the rules and laws of the native speaker and the native speaking country, and it is unfair and illogical
to expect a foreigner to perform and know as much as a native speaker. Nonetheless, this native speaker model is now deemed to be old-fashioned and unattainable in the world of Academia. In a parallel perspective, adopting a non-essentialist view of culture entails that the focus of the ELT and EFL teachers is to achieve an attainable and reachable goal. The 21st century ELT should train competent intercultural speakers who can communicate effectively and appropriately in today's multicultural world. Additionally, this non-determinist and complex view of culture guarantee the EFL students a more profound and humane training. It leaves no room for generalizations and stereotyping based on ethnicities, cultures, or countries. This certainly avoids students committing prejudice, racial, or stereotyping of others, mistakes which occur quite often and are more often neglected in the assessment by the EFL teachers. (Mustapha, 2014)

Global Citizenship Education

In response to the Council of Europe (2008) invitation towards "living together amid growing cultural diversity," (p. 51) non-essentialist approach towards culture and intercultural language teaching asserts a convenient training of EFL learners for international citizenship and a globalized world. In this regard, Zahabioun et al. (2013) argued that global citizenship means to have a global mind and the prerequisites to tackle the issues in the current world as one race, the human race, and move beyond the nation-state sense of identity. We argue that this can be done only by adopting the non-essentialist view of culture and perceiving others as individuals of the human race rather than individuals who belong to this or that nation.

Indeed, the current Covid pandemic has brought people of different nations together, as we were all harmed in one way or another, which raised people's empathy towards one another. The mission of Global Citizenship Education serves to solve such issues and is more significant, like social inequality or racial discrimination and democracy around the globe. In fact, what is required from students worldwide, including EFL students, is beyond perceiving other people from a non-essentialist view but to take part in challenging decisions for a better world. We can only train such students by particular teaching philosophies, such as perceiving culture from a non-determinist view, and perhaps, this is the least we can do.

Do we reject essentialism, then?

One may ask, do we reject essentialism then? Do we stick with neo-essentialism? or do we essentially embrace non-essentialism? We would answer that it depends on our ability rather than our preferences. We will discuss this point at the end of the article.

The short answer is that we cannot. According to Baumann (1996), the long answer is, despite scholars acknowledging diversities within nations, they are still bound to the fixed, determined cultural identity, which is contradictory and essentialist-like. Holliday (2011) has documented this and labelled it as neo-essentialism. Albeit we recommend EFL teachers adopt a pure non-essentialist view of culture, we still acknowledge how difficult it is to completely avoid the essentialist view of culture in the intercultural language teaching process.

Recommendations

Apart from the most vital recommendation in this critical discussion, adopting a non-culturalist understanding of culture concept in intercultural language teaching, we reckon few
recommendations for EFL policymakers in Algeria and worldwide, and EFL teachers too. Regarding the theories of culture and its impact on the outcomes of the ILT in the EFL classroom, we are faced with another issue, as the intercultural language teaching approach in itself should be appropriately introduced.

The policymakers should focus on proper training of the EFL teachers and grant them access to the necessary tools to do so. To begin with, teachers should get to know the importance of culture in the EFL classroom and the development of ICC of their learners. It is believed that the beliefs and philosophy of teachers determine their practices in the classroom. Therefore, the teachers should be encouraged to research and become experts in intercultural communicative competence. Additionally, Mustapha (2014) has tackled the issue of teaching culture as a bulk of outdated and irrelevant knowledge, which has to change. Teaching mere culture literature and ancient civilization does not meet the main goals of intercultural language teaching. The objective is not to fill in students with bulk knowledge about other cultures but to help them become intercultural speakers and acquire different attitudes, skills, and knowledge, which sets them for autonomous learning of foreign cultures and languages.

Moreover, EFL teachers' neglect of intercultural language teaching, as both a pedagogical practice and field of expertise, maybe due to the inherent negligence of intercultural competence within the curriculum. (Mustapha, 2014) Therefore, we insistently ask the concerned policymakers to include intercultural competence in higher education and assert its development, as it is due great significance in today's world.

Additionally, teachers should take the assessment of intercultural communicative competence more seriously. As Mustapha (2014) stated, we are unaware of EFL teachers' fundamental reasons to refrain from assessing ICC. Thus, a few things can be done, including providing teachers with more time in the curriculum to cover the cultural dimensions in their teaching session and enough time to assess the students' test and exam sheets to cover the ICC mistakes. The ICC mistakes include what scholars deem to be "negative qualities" of the intercultural speaker, ranging from prejudice, intolerance, stereotyping, culture-national driven generalizations, etc.

**Conclusion**

This article has critically discussed the culture concept and its related theories and understandings. We reckon culture is a crucial facet of teaching English as a Foreign Language, and thereby, we discussed how different interpretations of this concept could lead to further teaching outcomes. Byram's Model critiques exemplify why we should avoid the essentialist view of culture and instead rely on the non-essentialist conceptualization in ILT. Despite the apparent flaws in the essentialist view of culture and EFL teachers awareness of that, avoiding determinism is somehow an impossible task, as argued by scholars. Thus, we proposed a logical pattern towards embracing the complex view of culture by the EFL teachers and why it is essential to do in the 21st century.

This paper is mainly dedicated to EFL policymakers and EFL teachers and students alike towards the merits of adopting an anti-essentialist conceptualization of culture in their teaching. In this regard, we also discussed the possibilities of matching the global citizenship education
needs. We recommend further research on the possibilities of incorporating a syllabus within the EFL context, following an anti-essentialist conceptualization of culture to study further the ideas we proposed here.

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**References**


Abstract
The knowledge of vocabulary can be considered the main factor of understanding the context in learning a foreign or second language process. This can be seen clearly in international exams such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System). This research aims to analyze the vocabulary learning strategies of 42 Omani EFL learners and measure the effect of gender in strategy selection among them. To collect the information, a questionnaire regarding VLS (Vocabulary Learning Strategy) was distributed among college EFL learners, and the paper results revealed insignificant relation between gender with vocabulary learning strategies. Determination strategies, among all other strategies, received the highest ranking among the users, while social strategies were at the bottom of the list. Omani colleges and universities are using English as the medium of instruction, so the current study can help the syllabus designers and teachers deal with the psycholinguistic level of books, materials, teaching methods, and strategies appropriately. To gain a more comprehensive map of learning strategies all over Oman, it can be suggested that a network of researchers try to distribute the questionnaire among all Omani EFL learners through some random sampling, and results can be beneficial for future analysis of the psycholinguistics map of the education in Oman.

Keywords: Gender, EFL learners, Oman, Vocabulary learning strategies, Psycholinguistics

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Introduction

The vocabulary as a word is always connected to a wordlist all over the globe. All languages of the world are associated with this wordlist verbally and non-verbally. Therefore, vocabulary is an essential part of the procedure in learning English language, and there are some debates and research studies based on the percentages of crucial vocabulary in this process (Avila & Sdoski, 1996). In learning a new language, learners will focus on the vocabulary list of the target language. In addition to it, the lack of this vocabulary knowledge causes some non-accurate and non-fluent communication channels. Those words necessary for the proper communication are the fundamentals of every language. If the number of learned relevant vocabulary increases, better communication will happen. Vocabulary can stand beside grammar and pronunciation as necessary tools of language dominance (Brown & Palinscar, 1982; Brown & Perry, 1991). Some researchers like Brown and Palinscar (1982), Cohen and Aphek (1981), and Craik and Tulving (1975) believe that vocabulary is as important as four other primary skills of language learning.

Before the preliminary introduction of learning vocabulary, which has received some attention during the 1980s, this area had never received any compelling study and research (Abid, 2012). In 1976, Richards stated that language development could be considered as one of the most necessary steps of learning, but unfortunately, it did not receive the proper attention in learning a new language; however, a decade later, more research studies were conducted on this topic, and plenty of scholars focused on publishing on this topic (Al-Hamdany, 2018). Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) stated that the primary studies regarding vocabulary learning and acquisition concentrated on a few numbers of language learning strategies.

In addition, Meara (1980) discussed that vocabulary learning had received very little attention in the past, but nowadays, a substantial number of researchers have focused on this area. The eagerness to work and enthusiasm to study the learning and teaching of vocabulary has increased fast (Allen, 1983; Carter, 1987; Carter & McCarthy, 1988; McCarthy, 1990; Nation, 1990; Taylor, 1990; Hatch & Brown, 1995; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997; Schmitt, 2000; Read, 2000).

Sokman (1997) stated that the number of attempts sacrificed in the area of vocabulary learning could assist the learners in learning almost all the vocabulary needed in the class. Cunningsworth (1995) agreed that such methods could be very beneficial for the learners in the learning area to confirm such an idea. Such attempts started firstly with the focus on aspects of the target language or product and then continued to the direction of the process.

The term vocabulary, which is considered one of the main components of the learning process, is not effective when English is a subject to be learned inside the classroom (Al-Haysony, 2012). The procedures which some researchers have done to develop the English knowledge of students are mainly based on academic achievements and not vocabulary selection based on the suitability level during the teaching and learning processes. In such a situation, grammar is the main criterion to measure academic success and a reflective tool that shows the English proficiency level and measures academic achievement (Zhunag, 2008).
Laufer and Sim (1985) believed that one of the biggest problems of learning EFL could be seen in vocabulary learning because it is, indeed, one of the practical tools of learning another language. Nyikos and Fan (2007) stated that vocabulary learning is one of the critical tasks for language learners. Wilkins (1972) confirmed that little information could be transferred without any knowledge of grammar, but in that lack of vocabulary knowledge, almost no transfer of information would happen. In most places in the world, English learning emphasizes four primary skills: writing, reading, speaking, and listening. Between these, students can learn some random vocabulary with the definitions inside the text. Therefore, the learners will have more dependability on dictionaries to use the word (Hashemi & Hadavi, 2015).

Alavi and Kaivanpanah (2006) expressed that good vocabulary knowledge is necessary to communicate perfectly and efficiently in the second or foreign language context. In addition, following the recent research studies in the vocabulary learning area, language-learning strategies, which are applied appropriately, play functional roles in learning procedures (Brenner, 1999; Wharton, 2000). VLS or vocabulary learning strategies are considered the basis and essential element of language learning (Khatib, Hassanzadeh, & Rezaei, 2011). O’Malley and Chamot (1985) believed that learners rely heavily on vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) more often among all language learning strategies.

Alavi and Kaivanpanah (2006) justified the ignorance of vocabulary in syntax and phonology that were the focal point of teachers and researchers. Nowadays, vocabulary is one of the necessary fundamentals of ESL/EFL areas (Hashemi & Hadavi, 2015).

Due to the primary interest of exploring the practical strategies for language learners, researchers employed some tools to evaluate the impact of such approaches (Erten & Williams, 2008). It seems that some essential choices are available in this case. First, some research focused on strategies' impact on learning vocabulary (Cohen & Aphek, 1981; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Erten, 1988). The second type focused on the correlation coefficient of word frequencies from self-report questionnaires and other variables like vocabulary breadth and language proficiency (Ahmed, 1989; Fan, 2003; Gu & Johnson, 1996).

It can be observed that there have been plenty of efforts in research studies for a long time based on vocabulary learning. Vocabulary learning in the Middle East, specifically, is essential because students studying at colleges or preparing themselves for international tests such as IELTS and TOEFL spend lots of budget and time learning the words. Still, they forget to use them correctly and wisely. The present investigators of the study are trying to investigate different variables that may have direct or indirect impacts on the vocabulary learning strategies that the learners select in the learning process. The researchers believe that some inaccessible areas like the relation between vocabulary learning strategies and gender will be focused on and analyzed in detail later in this study.

The present paper tries to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What types of strategies are employed by Omani EFL learners to learn vocabulary better?
2. What are the most and the least frequent vocabulary learning strategies among Omani EFL learners?
3. Is there any relationship between gender and VLS among Omani EFL learners?

Literature Review

These strategies indirectly fall under general language learning strategies such as memory and cognitive strategies (Al Shuweirekh, 2001). The following classification is simply a general review of some strategies by active scholars of this area.

Cohen's (1990) Classification of Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS)

The primary classification of VLS was developed by Cohen (1990). He classified the vocabulary strategies into three groups: remembering words, vocabulary learning, and practicing words.

A. The remembering words strategies consist of nine components as follows:
   1. Creating a link between the word and the sound, whether in the native or a foreign language.
   2. Explaining the word meaning.
   3. Observing the word structure.
   4. Relating the word to a topic.
   5. Considering the occurrence of the word in isolation and among other words in text.
   6. Relating the word to a context.
   7. Relating the word to a mental image.
   8. Relating a physical dimension to the word.
   9. Having a keyword that represents the word.

B. The VLS include three components as follows:
   1. Analyzing the word.
   2. Learning about its derivatives.
   3. Learning dictionary skills.

C. The practicing words strategies consist of three components as well:
   1. Using flashcards.
   2. Making groups.
   3. Explaining the word and putting it in different contexts of occurrence.

Brown' and Payne's (1994) Classification System

According to Brown' and Payne's (1994) classification, there are five steps for vocabulary learning:

- The first step is creating opportunities for encountering new words to learn. This is achievable by listening to the radio, watching TV, reading books and newspapers in the target language, and talking with native speakers.
- The second step is to learn about the form of the words. This can be achieved by having groups of similar sounds and using phonetic symbols to differentiate the sounds. This can
also be true by relating the words to similar words in another language and searching for look-alike words from the words the learners know (cited in Hatch & Brown, 1995).

- The third step aims at checking the meaning of the words. This can be done through guessing, looking up the meaning in the dictionary, asking native speakers for the meaning, asking proficient speakers of the language (not necessarily being native) for the meaning, and providing a mental image for the words by relating them to pictures.

- The fourth step is to associate the word form and meaning to be part of the learner's memory. This can be realized through the various association and memory techniques (e.g., Oxford's memory strategies, 1990, and Cohen & Aphek's association techniques, 1981).

- Finally comes the step of word use. This step requires using the new words in context. However, if the learning objective is only receptive, this step can be ignored since it is a productive step.

**Schmitt’s (1997a) Classification System**

This type of classification covers a broader range of learning vocabulary (Al Shuwairekh, 2001). Schmitt (1997a) stated that VLS has two different types: discovery and consolidation strategies (cited in Al-Shuwairekh, 2001). Discovery is divided into determination and social strategies.

- Determination strategies work on determining the different pieces of information related to the new word's form, such as its part of speech, its derivatives, its image, and its related word lists. These strategies also discover the word's context and its dictionary meaning.

- Social strategies complement the discovery process of the new vocabulary by relating it to other individuals of the learner's society. The teacher plays a significant role in the social strategies. They may provide the word's translation in the learner's native language, explain its meaning in the target language, and put the new word in a sentence. Group work is also essential in this type of strategy, in which the meaning of the new word is discussed in groups.

The second type of vocabulary learning strategy is consolidation strategies. These strategies have four subcategories: social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies.

- Social strategies differ from those in the discovery strategies in that the main aim is practicing and consolidation and not exploring. Interaction with native speakers can be a technique of this strategy as well.

- Memory strategies aim to make memory associations learn the new vocabulary better and stick to the learner's mind. New words may be associated with pictures representing their meaning, personal experience, a story, an activity, a context, synonyms and antonyms, look-alikes, collocations, word lists, rhyming words, keywords, first letters, semantic features, formal features, derivatives, and parts of speech.

- Cognitive strategies complement mental memory strategies. They depend more on repetition, whether spoken or written, taking notes, labeling, and listening. Eventually,
the metacognitive strategy relies on multimedia (visual or auditory). Testing, evaluation, and follow-up are also important constituents of this type.

- Metacognitive strategies can be applied no matter the stage of vocabulary learning. Thus, the discovery and consolidation strategies are significant in vocabulary learning. The current study uses these strategies in its vocabulary learning strategies classification system (Schmitt, 1997, cited in Al Shuwairekh, 2001).

**Methods**

This section will present the method used to design the study and how to collect the required data. This study aimed at critically investigating the vocabulary learning strategies among Omani EFL Learners. To this end, a survey research method was used to collect data from the participants to gain information and insights on the vocabulary learning strategies used by Omani EFL learners. As follows, the lengthy procedure accommodating sampling, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis will be explained in the next sections.

**Participants**

The current research was conducted with some EFL learners in Oman in the year 2020. Through convenient sampling, a number of 42 male and female first-year college students with an age range of 18 to 19 were selected as the sample of the study. Convenient sampling is a type of sampling in which the easily accessible and available participants are chosen to participate in the study (Dornyei, 2007). All of the participants were from Oman and native speakers of Arabic with some English training.

The students had passed the General Foundation Program (GFP), which includes English general skills instruction for three consecutive semesters. This program aims to improve students' skills in English. Considering the placement test of the college and exams of the final educational semester, the students were at the intermediate level of language proficiency; therefore, it assured the homogeneity of the students.

**Research Instruments**

This study collected the required data via Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ) adapted from Schmitt (1997). In addition, the current questionnaire shared high relevancy with the learners' competence levels and their learning environments. VLSQ was used to discover the frequency of VLS used by the students. The written form of the questionnaire contained two parts. In the first part of the questionnaire, some personal information will be collected from the participants, including gender. The second part of the questionnaire will collect some information about the VLS of the participants based on a 44-items survey, including, i.e., Memory, Cognitive, Determination, Metacognitive and Social strategies. A Likert scale will be implemented to analyze the responses later.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, the current questionnaire was piloted by 20 participants who were excluded from the main study. The pilot study results showed a 0.84 reliability rate, which emphasizes the suitability of the questionnaire to complete this study.
Findings

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 was used to analyze the data. To answer the first question of the study, mean and standard deviation were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Independent sample T-test and Spearman Correlation were run as well. To measure the high frequent (1-2.4), mid-frequent (2.4-3.5), and low frequent VLS among the participants of this study, Oxford's (2001) scoring system was implemented.

Table one depicts the descriptive statistics of the whole questionnaire. The mean and standard deviation of the questionnaire in total were 3.24 and .40, respectively.

Table 1. The overall descriptive statistics of VLS used by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall_M</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>3.248</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The descriptive statistics of the five categories of VLS used by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>3.1003</td>
<td>.487</td>
<td>.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.7952</td>
<td>.794</td>
<td>.631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.2778</td>
<td>.747</td>
<td>.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.0873</td>
<td>.528</td>
<td>.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>2.9796</td>
<td>.747</td>
<td>.559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive statistics presented in Table two show that the highest mean was for the cognitive strategies (M= 3.79). The determination strategies ranked second, while the lowest mean was social strategies.

Table 3. The descriptive statistics of the memory strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>make a pic in mind</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.179</td>
<td>1.390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spelling new word</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.997</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study part of speech</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connect to experience</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.168</td>
<td>1.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paraphrase meaning</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.265</td>
<td>1.600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study sound of new word</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.370</td>
<td>1.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grouping the words</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.986</td>
<td>.972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new words coordinates</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.081</td>
<td>1.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connect to synonym</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.070</td>
<td>1.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use affixes and roots</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.081</td>
<td>1.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make an image in mind</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.091</td>
<td>1.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use semantic maps</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.251</td>
<td>1.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use keyword method</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td>1.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new word in sentence</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.001</td>
<td>1.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on Table three above, studying the spelling of the new words had the highest mean (M = 3.93), and finding the new word in a sentence had the second highest mean (M = 3.79). Using affixes and roots was the second lowest (M = 2.62), and using semantic maps had the lowest mean score among all other items in the memory strategy (M = 2.60).

Table 4. The descriptive statistics of the cognitive strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>over &amp; over repetition</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing many times</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make own list</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keep a vocab notebook</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take notes of new words</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depicted in Table four above, over and over repetition had the highest mean (M = 3.88), and writing many times had the second highest mean (M = 3.83). Taking notes of new words was the second lowest (M = 3.76), and keeping a vocab notebook had the lowest mean score among all other items in the cognitive strategy (M = 3.69).

Table 5. The descriptive statistics of the determination strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>identifying part of speech</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>break new vocab into parts</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>checking similar Arabic words</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analyzing pics to understand</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analyzing gestures to understand</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilingual dictionary Arab-Eng</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>1.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilingual dictionary Eng-Ara</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monolingual Eng-Eng</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guess meaning in context</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table five above, using a bilingual dictionary (Arabic to English) had the highest mean (M = 4.38), and checking similar Arabic words had the second highest mean (M = 3.90). Identifying part of speech was the second lowest (M = 2.81), and analyzing pictures to understand new words had the lowest mean score among all other items in the determination strategy (M = 2.60).

Table 6. The descriptive statistics of the metacognitive strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>watching English TV channels</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using computer programs</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening to English radio</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading English newspapers</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revise the newly learned</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continue to study</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab World English Journal
ISSN: 2229-9327
revise using spaced repetition 42 1 5 2.88 .942 .888
skip the new word 42 1 5 2.31 1.137 1.292
assess my vocab knowledge 42 1 5 3.25 .932 .869
Valid N (listwise) 42

As shown in Table six above, watching English TV had the highest mean (M = 4), and assessing my vocabulary knowledge had the second highest mean (M = 3.25). Revising the newly learned word using repetition was the second lowest (M = 2.88), and skipping the new word had the lowest mean score among all other items in the metacognitive strategy (M = 2.31).

Table 7. The descriptive statistics of the social strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ask teacher translate to Arabic</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.206</td>
<td>1.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask teacher paraphrase</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.156</td>
<td>1.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask teacher to make sentence</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.100</td>
<td>1.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask for accuracy of word list</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>.825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask classmate for meaning</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.962</td>
<td>.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find meaning via group work</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.047</td>
<td>1.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study in group work</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.117</td>
<td>1.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table seven above, finding meaning via group work had the highest mean (M = 3.69), and asking a classmate for the meaning had the second highest mean (M = 3.38). Asking the teacher to translate the word was the second lowest (M = 2.64), and asking for the accuracy of the wordlist had the lowest mean score among all other items in the social strategy (M = 2.17).

The Third research question discovered the significant role of gender in vocabulary learning strategies among Omani EFL learners. As a result, an independent-samples T-Test for the gender and strategy use was run. The following table tests the hypothesis of the normal data distribution.

Table 8. The result of the test of normality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in Table eight, the normality of distribution was confirmed (P > .05). Therefore, the parametric Independent-Samples t-test was used for mean comparison.

Table 9. The descriptive statistics for the gender and strategy use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.214</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.022</td>
<td>.398</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.611</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.920</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.281</td>
<td>.458</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.275</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.111</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.071</td>
<td>.572</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.907</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td>.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.028</td>
<td>.638</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in Table nine above, the mean scores for the male and female groups in memory, cognitive, determination, metacognitive, and social strategies are 3.21, 3.02; 3.61, 3.92; 3.28, 3.27; 3.11, 3.07; and 2.90, 3.02 respectively. Table 10 below shows the result of the inferential test.

Table 10. Result of the Independent-Samples T-Test for the gender and strategy use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>5.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>6.598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.727</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it can be seen in Table 10 above, there was no significant difference between the gender and the memory strategy, $P > .05$, the cognitive strategy, $P > .05$, the determination strategy, $P > .05$, the metacognitive strategy, $P > .05$, and Lastly, the social strategy, $P > .05$.

**Discussion**

The analysis of collected data revealed that Omani EFL college students used the mid-frequent VLS by the mean score of 3.247. It showed that Omani students did not employ various types of VLS. This study has some similarities with the one conducted by Saran and Kafipour in 2008. They vividly stated that Iranian learners were the mid-frequent users of VLS because of their little awareness of various types of such strategies.

The findings of this study to measure the first research questions indicated cognitive, and after that determination strategies were highly employed by Omani EFL learners in learning process. As Gu and Johnson (1996) stated, cognitive strategies could be a positive indicator of language proficiency; therefore, it can be claimed that Omani EFL students were using the cognitive strategies more than the other ones due to higher level of general English. The findings are in contrast with the one found in Sahbazian (2004). She discussed that Turkish students preferred to follow some sort of traditional strategies such as memorization and mnemonic techniques to learn vocabulary.

The measurements of second research question revealed that determination strategies were found as the second frequent VLS in this study. EFL learners in Muscat used more VLS, such as using a bilingual dictionary (Arabic to English) and checking similar Arabic words that were simple, direct, and engaged lower-level mental or mechanical processing compared to the cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategies. It can be inferred that EFL learners were familiar with determination strategies more than memory and metacognitive strategies. The findings are similar to the ones reported by Sahbazian (2004), where the learners mainly employed determination and memory strategies to elicit the meaning.

The third frequently used strategies are memory strategies placed in the center of all other employed strategies. Consequently, the frequency of this strategy is less than cognitive and determination one; however, it shows a higher frequency than social and metacognitive ones. The reason why memory strategies are located in this place might be because of lack of popularity among Omani EFL learners. The results of this part are in contrast with the one carried out by Bennett (2006). He (2006) used a questionnaire to investigate the vocabulary teaching aspect of an intensive English language-learning program for students who wanted to enter the undergraduate level in the USA. The results of his study revealed that metacognitive strategies are located in the center of all other available strategies.

Metacognitive strategies got the fourth ranking among all the VLS among Omani EFL students. In this category, there was a high-frequency level for watching English TV channels in this category, while the other VLSs were at medium and low use. The least employed VLS was
skipping the new word. The results of this study are not congruent with the previous study carried out by Rasekh and Ranjbry (2003), who show that metacognitive strategies positively affect EFL learners’ vocabulary learning.

Social strategies were revealed as the low-frequency VLS with the means core of 2.97. Since vocabulary learning is an individual activity, whenever the students are in contact with new words, they might not request the help of other people. In addition, learning a vocabulary is not in need of social interactions with others. The findings are the same as the research studies conducted by Liao (2002) and Sahbazian (2004).

The analysis of data to find an answer for the third research question found out that there was an insignificant difference between gender in all five categories of VLSs.

Conclusion

The current paper was looking to find answers to the research questions mentioned earlier in the paper. The focal point of curiosity was on the relationships among some variables such as the type of the vocabulary learning strategies, gender and VLS, common strategies among Omani EFL learners, and finally, the least-frequent vocabulary learning strategies among all. To run the study, 42 Omani EFL learners at the college level were selected based on convenient sampling and a questionnaire regarding VLS was distributed among them. The study revealed that Omani EFL learners are medium users of learning vocabulary strategies. Determination and cognitive strategies were observed to be to most commonly employed strategies by these learners. Social strategies received a minor ranking among all other strategies. The findings also revealed that there were no significant relations among age and VLS, proficiency level and VLS, and finally, gender and VLS.

Pedagogical Implication

The study can have implications for higher education lecturers and syllabus designers. Lecturers are implementing various strategies to teach the lessons effectively and engage students in several activities. It can be observed that such methods are not working correctly with the students, so the teacher should not always look for the problem in the training or engagement level of the students, but by reading this paper and many other similar ones, he can design and implement methods and techniques that are appropriate with the students’ vocabulary learning strategies. In addition, this paper can be beneficial for the syllabus designers to design materials that engage students effectively and adequately with prioritizing the most frequent learning strategies to the least frequent one in the same context, which is here the Omani EFL context.

Recommendations for Further Research

Considering this study, some suggestions can be made for further researchers or those interested in studying in this area.

- The number of students who were participated in this study was a very small sample of Omani EFL learners, which demands more studies with a bigger number of participants all over Oman.
This study employed a type of quantitative method to explain the results. If another study focuses on the qualitative side of the research, then more comprehensive viewpoints toward vocabulary learning strategies by Omani EFL learners can be available.

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Saudi Politeness: Request and Apology in the Context of Study and Work at King Abdulaziz University: A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract
The present study investigates the frequently used speech acts related to positive and negative politeness techniques employed in requests and apologies by faculty members at King Abdulaziz University. Social interaction on University Campus reflects Hejazi culture located in the Western Region of Saudi Arabia. The significance of the study arises from its focus on university-life interaction between faculty members as it provides an investigation of positive and negative politeness strategies. The paper tries to answer two questions: 1) Is there a relationship between the faculty’s years of experience and the request strategies employed? 2) Is there a relationship between the faculty years of experience and the apology strategies used? To answer these questions, a Discourse Completion Test was developed and given to 30 faculty members. The findings of the study show that social power, which is derived from having more years of experience, affects the request and apology strategies used among Saudi female faculty members. Faculty members of an older generation tend to use syntactically more extended sentences in requests compared to their younger colleagues, to alleviate the sense of their social power and save others’ sense of face. In contrast, the more youthful faculty members tended to use syntactically longer sentences in apologies compared to their older colleagues to show more respect. The study was conducted in Women Campus, and it is recommended to implement it on a larger scale with more participants to get more complete results.

Keywords: apology, face, mitigation, politeness strategies, softeners, syntactic down graders, request, speech acts

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Introduction
The present study examines the relationship between the age of faculty members (age reflects years of experience and level of seniority) and the speech acts they use in forming requests and apologies. The study classifies positive and negative politeness techniques in requests and apologies occurring in social interaction among Saudi faculty members in work and study at King Abdulaziz University. The type of strategy used determines the syntactic structure of language. The objective of the study is to identify the differences between older generation faculty members and younger generation faculty members in using requests and apologies related to campus life and the work environment. The study answers the following questions: Is there a significant relationship between the age of faculty members and the syntactic structure of apologies and requests they use? There are differences in the speech acts determined by social constraints involved in the situation. For instance, requests directed to superiors may be communicated indirectly, while requests addressed to peers or colleagues might be phrased in a rather explicit language. The present study is interlingual; it deals with speech acts variations in using requests and apologies in Hejazi Arabic. Accordingly, a Discourse Completion Test was prepared in Arabic; it contained situations like those encountered in daily social interaction on Women Campus. The significance of this study is that, to the researcher’s knowledge, there are no studies devoted solely to examining Hejazi Saudi female faculty use of request and apology speech acts, stating the factor of age (represented in the years of experience) as the significant indicator of the study. Moreover, the study attempts to analyze the syntactic structure of requests and apologies and reports if the participants’ years of experience/age had a bearing on choosing particular syntactic down graders among older and younger generation faculty members.

Literature Review
Theoretical Background
Politeness
Politeness lies at the core of Pragmatics. Politeness strategies focus on augmenting the addressee’s (positive face) and evading obligation (negative face) (Watts, 2003). Speakers and hearers should preserve one another’s face and minimize the risks of face loss and embarrassment. Brown and Levinson (1978) put a scale to determine the degree of politeness carried out in a speech by a speaker in a specific situation. According to Brown and Levenson (1987), politeness strategies fall into five categories regarding speakers’ choice to perform face-threatening acts (FTAs): “Bald on-record, positive politeness, off-record, and no FTA wherein the chances of face loss get minimized. shows these five categories” (p. 60). The five categories of Face-Saving Activity are shown in Figure one.
Brown & Leveson’s model explains that indirectness is closer to negative politeness. Using more words before a request and an apology creates an impression that the speaker is polite. A face-threatening behavior or a nasty request could lead to a long-term tribal conflict. The concept of face is essential. Brown and Levinson (1987) emphasize that “face is something that is emotionally invested and can be lost, maintained or enhanced and must be constantly attended to” (61). Since the face is the most crucial aspect in a dialogue, ignoring this concept can result in embarrassment and humiliation. Strategies are arranged hierarchically according to what extent they threaten the listener’s self-esteem. In other words, asking people to do things indirectly sounds more polite. For instance, giving suggestions or hints instead of orders (e.g., I wonder if we can print some files”). On-record FTAs fall in between these two extremes. Negative politeness is less threatening than positive politeness because the latter supposes closeness between speakers and hearers. The speaker’s and hearer’s power, social distance and their position in their culture are major sociological variables determining their interaction (Brown & Levenson 1987). Mazid (2008) maintains that “determining social distance involves considering the roles people are taking in relation to one another in a particular situation, as well as how well they know each other” (p. 18).

Lakoff adds the condition of clarity to politeness. Lakoff argues that “politeness is normally more important than clarity to promote inter-personal relationships and to build rapport between people” (pp 297-298). In addition, Leech (2003) assumes a politeness principle with the conversational maxims, which is essential for interaction. Leech divides politeness principles into six interpersonal categories, which emphasize the conversational aspect in human interaction. These maxims (Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy) explain the bond/relationship between face and power in daily communication; using these maxims will result in a more polite interaction between speakers and hearers.

Hence, the literature review in the present study is relevant to investigating the speech acts used in requests and apologies at work and study at King Abdulaziz University. Many previous studies investigated apologies, such as Rizk (1997), Nuredden (2008), Ajaj (2012), Citinavci (2012), and Al-Sobh (2013). Apology studies in Saudi society include Al-shalawi

**Speech Acts of Request**

Speech acts are representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, according to Searle (1969). Requests are among the daily usages of speech acts; communications between interlocutors usually commence with a request. Several linguistic structures can convey requests, which can be declarative, interrogatives, or imperatives. Requests are face-threatening acts; to avoid offending the listener, a speaker must adopt some strategies (Achiba, 2003). Indirectness and politeness affect face in requests speech acts. Speakers need to resort to indirectness to decrease and mitigate the threat of losing face hindering conversational interaction. Politeness is parallel to the indirectness of request.

**Request Categories and Strategy Classification**

Direct strategies convey only one illocutionary force or purpose, whereas indirect strategies, on the other hand, imply various meanings. Trosborg (1995) grouped the strategies used to form requests: direct, hearer-based, speaker-based, and indirect. Earlier research papers provided the base to these strategies, especially the studies of Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and the experiments of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Trosborg’s taxonomy of request strategies will be the same model used for classifying the responses of participants in the present study. The categories range from direct to indirect, or from the least polite to the polite responses, which fall between direct and indirect strategies.

**Speech Acts of Apology**

Apologizing is a speech act that includes numerous methods and sub-strategies. Olshtain (1989) defines an apology as a verbal act that expresses support for the offended addressee. The speaker is willing to degrade himself to guarantee that the apologies are face-saving acts for the hearer while also being a face-threatening act. Apologies are labeled to be expressive speech acts, according to Searle (1969).

**Methods**

The present study employs Trosborg’s Taxonomy of request realization strategies (1995) to classify and analyze participants’ strategies in making requests. This model has been chosen for easiness of application. Participants gave responses that were categorized according to this taxonomy. As a result, their requests were classified as direct (if they are in the form of obligations or orders), or indirect (if requests are given in the form of hints). Between these two extremes, requests can be conventionally indirect (speaker-based) or hearer-based.

Apology responses were analyzed using Olshtain’s and Cohen’s classification of apology strategies. It consists of five major parts: An expression of apology, an explanation of the excuse, an acknowledgment of the responsibility, an offer of repair (which is always voluntarily done), and a promise of not repeating the mistake.

The Discourse Completion Test (DCT) link was distributed among faculty via WhatsApp. The DCT had ten questions; participants required about ten minutes to write the
answers. Participants were told to write the first answer or response that came to their minds. Apology responses were classified and analyzed according to apology strategies that Olshtain and Cohen (1983) created. Request strategies were classified according to Trosborg (1995).

**Participants**

The sample in this study consisted of 30 Saudi female faculty members teaching at King Abdulaziz University who belong to the Women Campus. The sample subjects live in the Region of Mekkah, the heart of Hejazi culture. They have work experience ranging from three to over twenty-five years. The study was conducted in May 2021 before summer vacation. The sample contained both newly appointed and instructors, with expertise reaching 25 years. Also, the sample included various academic ranks: instructors, lecturers, assistant professors, and associate professors. The study investigates the element of years of experience (which is a status indicator) and its effect on selecting the politeness strategies used in requests and apologies used among faculty members on Women Campus. The following chart represents the range of years of experience, which is an indicator of the age participants had.

![Figure 2. Participants’ years of experience](image)

Participants received a WhatsApp message containing a link to answer the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). Among the 40 Faculty members who received the link, only 30 responded and agreed to participate in the study. The participants were given specific instructions to write down the first thought that came to their minds and to use colloquial everyday Arabic employed in real-life social interactions on campus.

**Research Instruments**

A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was prepared to investigate how Saudi female faculty make requests and apologies in their native Hegazi dialect. The DCT tool is well-known for its high reliability, according to Yamashita, (1996). In addition, it is a “production questionnaire” since it reveals participants’ pragmatic competence in a real-life context. In building up the questions of the DCT, the researcher benefited from the design of similar DCTs created by Blum-Kulka (1982), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986), Cetinavci (2012), Alzeebaree and Yavuz (2017), and Qari (2017).

The DCT was created to reflect real situations occurring on campus; it introduced realistic incidents in an open-ended format. The first five situations of the DCT prompted requests and the last five elicited apologies. The setting and context of each discourse sequence were explained in each situation. Also, there was a clarification of the distance and power between the interlocutors. Participants were required to fill the blank slot after each written
situation; they had to state the answers usually given in similar real-life situations. Participants needed about ten minutes to write their responses to the DCT situations.

**Procedures**

After designing the DCT, two colleagues revised and proofread its content and language. Then, the researcher created a google form of the DCT and sent its link via WhatsApp and email to 45 participants because it was quarantine time; face-to-face meetings were not possible. Responses were received from 30 participants only. There was a prerequisite that all the participating faculty members to be of Saudi nationality, specifically from the Region of Mekkah. In addition, the DCT form contained a part collecting the participants’ data (years of experience, age …etc.). The reason for investigating the years of experience factor is that it indicates participants’ ages, and their status in the educational institute.

**Results**

The results answered the research questions. The first research question: Is there a relationship between faculty members’ years of experience and the request strategies they produce? The results of the DCT contained a total number of 300 responses (150 requests and 150 apologies since each one of the 30 faculty members has written five requests and five apologies). The first part of the DCT had five situations that required writing requests. The responses contained 14 (10%) indirect requests, 30 (21%) conventionally indirect (speaker-based) requests, (62%) conventionally indirect (hearer-based) and only ten (7%) direct performative requests. This means 83% of the responses are indirect. This result reflects faculty members’ use of negative politeness strategies to save the hearer’s face. Comparing responses to the faculty members’ ages showed that older faculty use more indirect requests than younger faculty. The reason behind that could be their desire to mitigate the social power acquired from their status as seniors. Table three explains in detail the distribution of responses:

| Table 1. Applying Taxonomy of request realization strategies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Categories | Request strategies | Examples | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 | Situation 4 | Situation 5 | Total |
| 1 | Indirect | Hints | Statement | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 14 | 14 |
| 2 | Conventionally indirect (Speaker-based) | Wishes | I would like to … | 0 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 0 | 12 | 30 |
| 3 | Conventionally indirect (hearer-based) | Ability | Can/could you … | 10 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 28 | 88 |
| | Willingness | Would you…? | 8 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 30 | |
| | Permission | May I…? | 0 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 0 | 20 | |
| | Suggestory formula | How about…? | 4 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 10 | |
| 4 | Direct | Elliptical phrase | Your book. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 10 |
| | Performative | I ask you to … | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 10 | |
| | imperatives | Lend me your book. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

*Note 1. Adapted from Trosborg (1995, p. 219)*

To provide a visual representation of results, Figure two shows the ratio of each strategy used: Most requests were hearer-based (62%). Then, speaker-based (21%) came second in rank. The indirect request strategies and hints represented (10%) and (7%) respectively. Direct requests were used with students to highlight the elements of social power to maintain
In direct requests, participants tended to employ indirect strategies. Direct methods (i.e., imperatives) were not used by anyone because they have negative implications in Hejazi culture.

The second research question: Is there a relationship between faculty members years of experience and the apology strategies they produce? Analyzing participants’ responses shows that they used more than one apology in the meantime: younger faculty members tended to employ more extended syntactic formulas in their apologies compared to their older colleagues. For example, an apology statement could be accompanied by a justification and confession of responsibility or an offer of repair. Table four demonstrates in detail the exact distribution of the used strategies.

Table 2. Classification of participants’ use of apology strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Situation 1</th>
<th>Situation 2</th>
<th>Situation 3</th>
<th>Situation 4</th>
<th>Situation 5</th>
<th>Total No. of strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Expression of apology</td>
<td>An expression of regret</td>
<td>I’m sorry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An offer of apology</td>
<td>Excuse me</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A request for forgiveness</td>
<td>Forgive me</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Explanation or account of the situation</td>
<td>I forgot</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., I forgot)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Acknowledgment of responsibility</td>
<td>Accepting the blame</td>
<td>It’s my mistake</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expressing self-deficiency</td>
<td>I was absent-minded</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognizing the other person as a deserving apology</td>
<td>You’re right</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expressing lack of intent</td>
<td>I did not do it on purpose</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 An offer of repair</td>
<td>I'll clean the desk</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Promise of forbearance</td>
<td>This is the last time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 2. Adapted from Cohen, Olshtain & Rosenstein (1985, p.8)
The expression of apology contained three sub-strategies: showing regret, an offer of apology and asking for forgiveness - 160 responses reflected in the percentage of (22%). There were 126 (27%) responses containing explanations or justification of the apology. The acknowledgment of responsibilities is evident in 140 responses (31%). Then, the offer of repair got 62 answers (13%). The responses which provide a promise of forbearance received a percentage of (7%) representing 30 responses.

![Figure 4. Distribution of apology strategies](image)

**Figure 4.** Distribution of apology strategies

Participants, according to Figure four, employ more strategies at a time and resort to using more extended syntactic formulas of apology. The results support the hypothesis that negative politeness strategies are highly utilized. The high ratio of indirectness reflects a high level of negative politeness in the Hejazi culture represented in on-campus interaction. Social power is minimized in apology patterns. The older faculty members are aware of their status; they are already warranted. Younger faculty members use more than one strategy to create solid and effective apologies. Perhaps this is a way to compensate for the difference in social power.

**Discussion**

**Requests**

Arabic language is not as rich in modals as English is. As a natural compensation, there is an obvious use of intensifiers (e.g., very, really …etc.) and religious softeners (e.g., prayers of good wishes). While investigating the aspects of social power among teachers, it was noted that participants use rather indirect language with their superiors (heads) and students. However, they might use rather direct strategies with their peers. It goes with the social norms of the Arabic culture to be even gentler with those who have less power (e.g., younger colleagues).

For instance, in a request situation which faculty members had to answer, one of the participants mentions softening expressions like (beautiful ladies, speak in a lower tone, please يا حلوات وطوا الصوت من فضلكم. (Could you please, dear ones, speak quietly لو سمحتوا عزيزاتي يا ريت توطوا (أصواتكم. It is a request alleviated by a softener (dear ones). Also, 95% of the requests were mitigated by religious softeners like prayers: (May Allah grant you happiness الله يسعدك) (May Allah reward you الله يجزاك خير). Employing conditionals helps listeners save their face and allow an option of refusal to the hearer (e.g., If you could- if possible- if it is OKإذا ممكن- لو تقدر- لو ممكن. Social power in that context stems from a speaker's ability to save face. It is essential not to
embarrass the addressee. Faculty members of older age tend to use more extended sentences in requests as they use more semantically compound structures. For example, one of the participants wrote the following request: (May Allah grant you happiness. I know I am asking for a lot. But I had an emergency. If it is not going to bother you, could you please replace me in class tomorrow?) (الله يسعدك حبيبتي. عارفة راح أثقل عليك. بس عندي ظرف طارئ وإذا ما فيها كلافة أحتاج منك تغطي مكاني. The more indirect the response is, the more extended the sentences are. Most of the participants employed more than one strategy to form their requests.

Apology

The second part of the DCT had five apology situations. Most of the answers to these five DCT questions, which the 30 teachers have given, contained the words (I am sorry - أعتذر - آسف) with intensifiers meaning (very/really sorry - أعتذر جدًا - مرة أعتذر). Sentences usually start with the apology formula. Then, excuses or explanations are provided later. The results are in concordance with Alsulayyi (2016) when it comes to taking responsibility and promise of repair. All the responses related to apology contained Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) such as (I am sorry, I beg your pardon, I apologize, forgive me…etc.).

Data analysis has also shown that faculty members with younger age tend to use more extended sentences (e.g., longer semantic formulas) while apologizing. For instance, in one of the situations, a participant says: (Dear ones, I apologize to you. I swear I forgot about it. I am sorry. Really, it didn’t come to my mind) (أعتذر منكم عزيزاتي، والله مرة نسيت. آسف بس من جد راح عن بالي). Apologies contained both explanations and excuses simultaneously. All the participants offered to provide repair or compensation, or redress. Also, all forms of apology were accompanied by one or more strategies: explaining (e.g., my brother tore your book apart); stating responsibility for the mistake (e.g., It’s my mistake/fault); pledging or promising forbearance (e.g., This will not happen again).

Based on the Discourse Completion Test data, the elicited responses of participants were analyzed, bearing in mind the social power aspect represented by the years of experience. The findings go in agreement with Cetinavici’s study (2012). The apologetic and request speech conform to many shared realization patterns. Apology and request are shaped by the social and interpersonal atmosphere involved in a particular situation. Giving excuses, explanations, justifications, reasons, and pretexts are always associated with apologies (Benoit, 1997). The most common method utilized by Arabs, according to Al-Zumor (2003), was taking on responsibility. The present research results concord with Qari’s (2017), who concludes that IFIDs and taking responsibility were the most widely used methods of apologizing. The results are similar to Altayari’s (2017) results, which proved that IFID were the most used strategies. She concluded that showing regret is more essential than asking for forgiveness among Saudi men and women. In addition, the present results agree with Alageel (2016), who studied requests and apologies in Pidgin Arabic.

The research significance arises from its realistic explanation of social power between faculty members and their peers, superiors, and inferiors in daily exchange on campus. It is essential to grasp the social and cultural background of Hegazi culture and its keen respect of face which is very sensitive. Politeness strategies are strictly followed among faculty members in their social interaction with peers and students on women campus. It is recommended to
investigate the aspects of social power in the interaction of faculty members on Men Campus, too, to form a complete evaluation of gender and social power elements (represented in the years of experience in this study).

**Conclusion**

The present study attempted to answer two questions: 1) Is there a relationship between the faculty members’ years of experience and the request strategies employed? 2) Is there a relationship between the faculty members’ years of experience and the apology strategies used? The study is a recent account of how social power, represented in the years of experience, shows itself in employing indirect strategies of politeness. Syntactic down graders (especially the embedded ‘if’ clause) characterize requests. Additionally, extended syntactic formulas (the use of two or three request or apology expressions) were employed to add emphasis and save face among interlocutors. The study fills a gap in literature because, to the researcher’s knowledge, it is the first study to be fully dedicated to investigating request and apology among Saudi female faculty in the Hejazi region, bearing in consideration the elements of social power and distance together with the factors of age and experience of the participating faculty members. Faculty members are more apt to use negative indirect politeness techniques in requests and apologies because the culture of Hejaz -and Saudi Arabia in general- is known for its tolerance and commitment to the religious teachings; in this place of the world indirectness conveys a great deal of respect which is shown in using indirect politeness strategies. Faculty members of older age used syntactically more extended sentences in requests to alleviate the impact of their social power (power is mainly derived from old age and long work experience; both necessitate respect from younger generation faculty members) and save others’ (younger faculty members) face and dignity. Faculty members of younger age tended to employ syntactically more extended apologies. The study has been conducted at Women Campus. It is recommended to implement it on a larger scale to include other campuses and universities.

**About the author**

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**References**


Appendices
Appendix A
Faculty Discourse Completion Test

Personal Information:
Residence: in Jeddah □ Outside Jeddah □
Age: 20-29 □ 30-39 □ 40-49 □ 50-60 □
Years of experience: Less than five □ 5-10 □ 11-15 □ 16-20 □ 20+ □

Part A: Request
1. You have personal circumstances which require your absence from work for two days. You must find someone to replace you. You ask your colleague to replace you, saying:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)
2. You face a problem while printing an urgent file. You need to go to a neighboring office, and you know for sure that your colleague is very busy. You will ask her to print the file for you saying:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)
3. Your colleague has prepared an excellent PowerPoint presentation, and you inform her that it will be helpful if it is used in your class. You tell her:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)
4. After reaching campus, you discover that you have no money. You ask your colleague to lend you a hundred Riyals. You say:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)
5. Some students are chatting in a loud voice in front of your office, which is disturbing you. You want them to keep quiet, you say:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)

Part B: Apology
6. When you were at your colleague’s office, you accidentally spilled coffee on her desk. You apologize, saying:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)
7. You promised your colleague that you would replace her when she is absent. But, for unexpected circumstances, you cannot accomplish your promise. You apologize, saying:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)
8. You borrowed a book from your colleague. But you lost it. You apologize, saying:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)
9. You had an agreement with your students to offer them an extra class before the final exam. But you had other work responsibilities and you forgot to give that class. You apologize to your students, saying:
   (________________________________________________________________________.)
10. You have an important meeting with your coordinator, but you forgot it. Later she asks you about the reason for not coming. You apologize, saying:
    (________________________________________________________________________.)
From Natural Translanguaging to Planned Translanguaging: Developing Classroom Translanguaging as Pedagogy in a Private University in China

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Abstract
Despite a large body of literature on English learning using translanguaging, such research on the role of translanguaging on English reading among Chinese private university students is minimal. The present study presented a need for teachers in an English medium instruction context to mitigate language deficiencies where the students are not able to perform in an English-only classroom. The research examined when and how translanguaging emerges in Chinese private university students’ English reading practice. Ethnographic research methods were implemented over a six-month period. Twenty-eight students and their teacher participated in this study. Data were collected through classroom observations, open-ended interviews. Translanguaging as theoretical framework and nexus analysis as analytical framework were employed to examine the real reading practice of private university students and their trajectories of the shift from natural translanguaging to planned translanguaging. The findings indicated that: a) reading using translanguaging rather than English medium instruction is typical in teaching and reading practices among private university students in China; b) although Chinese private university students as a community of low English proficiency appreciated the pedagogical translanguaging, they still needed time, space, and planned translanguaging to reconcile the tension between translanguaging and English medium instruction.

Keywords: Chinese private university students, English medium instruction, monolingual ideology, nexus analysis, translanguaging

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Introduction

With the implementation of the China Standards of English (CSE), English is a highly sought-after language in China. The mastery of English reading can create many opportunities and ensure academic success. Total English immersion in second language acquisition has been seen as an ideal environment for English learning oriented by monolingual ideologies (García & Li, 2014; Li & Lin, 2019). Concomitantly, English Medium Instruction (EMI) as a new form of linguistic practice has been perceived and implemented globally for English proficiency (Chang, 2019; Rose & Galloway, 2019). However, there is a growing reality, primarily for emergent bilingual readers, in non-Anglophone countries that or translanguaging or bilingualism (multilingualism) is more representative of real language practice (Penoycook, 2020). Unlike instructional practices within monolingual ideologies that perceive languages as static, translanguaging sees language as a “multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource that human beings use for thinking and for communicating thought” (Li, 2017, p. 18). Pedagogical translanguaging is highly recommended in different countries since this inclusive use of English in the classroom values the divergences between ideal monolingual ideology and translanguaging practices concerning speakers, repertoires, and social contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Therefore, translanguaging as pedagogy in the classroom can actively challenge the devaluation of emergent bilingual learners, their community, and their culture in school and in the wider society (Cummins, 2021a).

The overwhelming majority of Private Universities students (PUSs) in China are in the lower tier of academic performance (i.e., without the foundational skills, without the requisite knowledge, and without inner motivation). High-performing students account for a very small portion of the student body. This phenomenon stems from the nature of private universities in China which were launched alongside economic reform to meet the demands for private higher education. PUSs have not developed study habits, especially reading text materials, which are essential to their academic success in universities. Therefore, most English majors in a private university are emergent bilingual readers with low English and academic skill proficiency.

EMI as a school language policy for better future workforce and student enrollment fuels the reading anxiety of PUSs since it shapes the classroom linguistic choice (Galloway, Kriukow, & Numajiri, 2017). When almost all the teaching and learning practices have drifted into a monolingual orientation, students in these EMI programs have difficulty in making meaning of both worlds of L1 and L2. They thus have difficulty in being fully engaged in classroom reading activities. More so, they do not see the value of their mother tongue due to their attachment to native English norms, which can potentially devalue their language and culture (Galloway et al., 2017).

In the Chinese context of the present study, students can be labeled by the administration as Three Without Students (TWS) because they enter classrooms without a pencil, without a notebook and without a textbook. Their defensive actions in English-only classrooms reveal the paucity of research that investigates an ecological and inclusive reading model, such as reading using translanguaging (Back, Han, & Weng, 2020). As Chang (2019) argues, the significance of making a contingent and contextual university language policy lies in its determination of language management, language practice, and language ideology. The present strategies of
translanguaging are discussed in terms of how they helped students mitigate labels such as TWS and become more confident in English reading abilities.

Prompted by the above consideration, the present study seeks to answer the question: When and how does translanguaging emerge in PUSs’ English reading practices? The research objective is to explore the principled use of Li (Mandarin Chinese) in L2 (English) reading practices.

**Literature Review**

**Translanguaging**

As Pennycook (2016) noted, “something has been going on recently in sociolinguistics with a sudden upsurge” (p. 201). He was referring to recent terminological trends in sociolinguistics that emphasized movements such as mobility, superdiversity, and translanguaging (García, 2009; García & Li, 2014; Li, 2011). With its eruption and proliferation in sociolinguistics, translanguaging has permeated multiple disciplines committed to English study globally in applied linguistics, which brought about a shift in terms of research concern from describing the language features of peripheral English to interdisciplinary trans-constructs (Jenks & Lee, 2020).

From the lens of translanguaging, the boundaries between named languages have been blurred into a single linguistic repertoire in which there is no L1 or L2, but only Ln, which establishes translanguaging space (García & Wei, 2014). There were no native speakers or non-native speakers, but only Global English speakers (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Language speakers can employ various resources in their linguistic repertoires to communicate. They can flexibly switch from one language to another for input and output. This translanguaging was consistent with its original use as a pedagogical strategy by Williams (1996), who coined the term *trawsieithu* in Welsh. The “trans” aspects of language and education were emphasized from three main fronts: going between and beyond linguistic systems and spaces; transforming language practices and cognition; social structures; and tapping into the trans-disciplinary consequences of languaging and educational analysis. Within this “trans” turn, translanguaging provided us with an alternative way of thinking about unequal linguistic resource distribution (Pennycook, 2020). Our translanguaging practices always mirrored critical and creative language use and thus pushed positive social change (Jenks & Lee, 2020). Therefore, this paradigmatic shift has given way to new conceptions of how the English language should be taught.

**Translanguaging as pedagogy**

Li (2017) developed and contextualized translanguaging, arguing that translanguaging provides detailed description, dialogical understanding, and holistic interpretations to the careful observation of observer-analysts based on the rich interactions between language speakers, teachers, and researchers. Cummins (2019) presented the primary studies that incorporated translanguaging as a pedagogical initiative from the 1990s through 2000s in American and Canadian contexts. Although the learners in these examples with various demographic backgrounds, share a common goal of promoting their target language with the aid of their home language. García’s (2009) elaboration on the active dialogue between translanguaging practice and instructional pedagogy expanded the theoretical scope of this construct. These research projects reflected teachers critically refuting the assumption of maximum exposure in the target language and the L1-L2 solitudes, welcoming one linguistic repertoire to promote social justice.
Additionally, Creese and Blackledge (2010)’s research was a good argument for liberation from monolingual instruction. They classified utterances from bilingual audio transcripts, which provided telling evidence to show that such classification was meaningless both for the speaker and for the readers. Thus, in bilingual contexts, both English and community language were needed concurrently to deliver meaning, transmit information and perform identities.

The above studies showed us that understanding translanguaging as pedagogy implied a shift in terms of the learning and teaching objectives from English speakers to bilingual speakers and from language features to language practices. The change resonated with the movement from an English-only ideology to a pedagogical translanguaging initiative. From the lens of sociolinguistics, translanguaging reflected the issue of language choice, which matters since languages have a mutual impact, expand, contract, or even die (Coulmas, 2005). Some scholars find that it was possible for bilingual speakers to develop their target language and sustain their mother tongue. For example, some studies (Du, Lee, & Sok, 2020; Li, 2011) found that teachers who were able to distinguish between China English and Chinglish, translanguaging, and simple translation can scaffold bilingual speakers for appropriate and creative linguistic production.

Methods

Participants

The present study is an ethnographic research project that occurred over a timescale of a half-year period in the 2020-2021 academic year. The participants were from a convenience sample and included 28 second-year students at a private university, their mother tongue is Mandarin Chinese, and they are learning English as a foreign language to be primary or middle school teachers. Participants also include the author as the teacher-researcher.

Research Instruments

This ethnography followed Scollon and Scollon’s (2004) field guide for nexus analysis. Nexus analysis was the ethnographic and systematical mapping of cycles of discourses to shape social actions (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The unit of analysis was the social actions of social actors, which was also employed by the present study for data analysis. A nexus of practice was a moment that links and transforms the historical trajectories of social actions and social actors. A recent study reported a reflective nexus analysis of classroom practices that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic induced online teaching and learning. Jocuns, Shi, Zhang, Yin, Gu, Huang, Zhang, and Zhang (2020) illustrated how nexus analysis could be employed as a reflective analysis by explaining three main factors: the historical body, interaction order, and the discourses in place.

Rose, McKinley, and Baffoe-Djan (2020) suggested that classroom observation offered a researcher an opportunity to collect naturally occurring data (natural translanguage) directly from the research context. A protocol for field notes of classroom observation was designed to examine videos after they had been recorded. To make the participants have a great understanding of translanguage, a three-hour training class was also carried out during the intervention phase. Triangulating data from fieldnotes and artifacts (video recording, photographs, and participants’ texts) in this manner establishes rigor of the data and data collection process.
Research Procedures

Based on the field guide for nexus analysis, the research process involves three phases:

The first phase (one month) was focused solely on classroom observation without translanguaging intervention. An intensive reading course, General English, was selected and video-recorded for classroom observation. Field notes were taken after class within 24 hours using word processing software. These notes included recording the classroom site, student participants, the teacher’s description, reflection, belief, and thoughts discerned by the researcher based on the protocol. Video play-back contributed to promoting detailed field notes.

In the second phase (four months), classroom observation and fieldnote-taking continued differently from the first phrase by consistently planned translanguaging from the teacher-researcher in the reading classroom.

The third phase (one month) focused on data analysis and research reports. For classroom observation, the unit of analysis was the actions of the participants. The participant-analyst concentrated on identifying the actions in the nexus practice that can transform discourses into actions and actions into new discourses and practices.

Results

To identify the themes of the present study, 34 video files totaling 3160 minutes in duration (one class for each file for 90 minutes) were recorded in a smart classroom. The video clips involving the representative actions of translanguage were recorded and transcribed as evidence to identify which research questions they support. Concomitantly, field notes of classroom observation were kept based on the protocol and included about 25000 words in English. Twelve types of translinguaging strategies were naturally or purposefully used by participants. Here, the following sections entail and focus on eight episodes representing one primary translanguage strategy, although each episode may reflect more than one. Translanguaging practices might co-occur, and they are not necessarily isolates. Each episode explains translanguage practices that emerged during data analysis.

Episode 1: The translanguaging resources commonly used by PUSs in reading

We found that some students could use the material tools of translanguage, such as translation apps, bilingual dictionaries, and glossaries from reference books. As a critical medium, these translanguage resources helped them enhance their expression of specific proper names, highlight their comprehension of idioms and slang, and foster their understanding of cultural issues. When teachers regularly reminded and encouraged students to use these tools and explicitly taught and modeled how to use them, then these translanguage resources were able to offer both an opportunity and a strategy for students to use in autonomous learning. One other thing this illustrates was how the TWS as a form of identity labeling was dated. While students were discouraged from using their smartphones in class due to distraction, if they were afforded the space and resources, they could turn such “distractions” into practical literacy tools.

Episode 2: Flipped classroom model involving translanguage

A female student, Esther, received the task of retelling a story as the background information of the excerpt of a long and complex text. She had a before-class discussion in Chinese with the
teacher. Her well-designed mind map in English as a discussion and learning outcome of deep thinking demonstrated her learning agency, which was inspired by the modified nexus of practice at the intersection of her historical body (an advanced reader with creativity), interaction order (the teaching design of flipped classroom model, dialogue journals and translanguaging as mediational means to negotiate how to read to the whole class) and the discourse in place (using translanguaging strategies to display the ways of thinking about reading). In class, she clearly and logically retold the story guided by the mind map in a few minutes which enhanced classroom interaction quality. Although translanguaging during the before-class discussion was not observable in the real classroom observation, its function cannot be ignored. Without the awareness of the effective use of translanguaging strategies, the in-class activity may not go well within the limited class time. Drawing upon various mediational means mentioned above, Esther demonstrated her growth, positioning her historical body as that of a high-performing reader explicitly and of an emergent translanguager implicitly. Figure one was a video capture of Esther using her mind map to retell the story.

Figure 1. Esther’s retelling the story with the aid of her mind map

*Episode 3: Eliciting more comprehensive answers using translingual IRE/F pattern*

An extract of conversation (Appendix B) between the teacher and the students in this educational context clearly showed the use of translanguaging in the IRE/F pattern as a feature of classroom interaction reframed by the alternation of Chinese and English (Mehan, 1979, 1985, 1998; Walsh, 2006, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). It illustrated how to capitalize on the use of the shared mother tongue of the teacher and her students to discuss how the author described an underdeveloped village. The teacher was successful in getting her students engaged in negotiation and eliciting more comprehensive responses, like Turns six and nine, in Extract one (Appendix B).

The finding showed that, in the emergent reading stage, translanguaging practices are unique and dispensable, especially for low preforming readers. Therefore, in L2 reading instruction, we called for synergistic use of named languages to establish a translanguaging classroom to meet the needs of a diversified ecological microsystem (Van Lier, 2008).

*Episode 4: Resourcing the print environment with in-class translingual texts*

Figure two showed the local texts produced by the students in the form of hand notes after reading the designated text in the classroom. They also indicated that it was necessary to use of the students’ L1 during L2 reading. The benefits were threefold. First, it was helpful for the
students to show and share their comprehension of the content (e.g., a melting pot) and give their opinions (e.g., China is a melting pot). Second, reading the local texts from their peers in both L1 and L2 can be seen as a supplementary resource to enhance the students’ own deeper comprehension of the theme. Daisy’s comprehension was beyond the word level. She can perform a holistic reading using all her linguistic repertoire. For instance, she made sense of “a melting pot” in both the worlds of L1 and L2. She kept the sentence patterns for a debate, like “The support(er)s (believe)...The opponents (argue)...I think...”. Third, it was helpful for the teacher to have a reflection on her teaching efficiency. We can see that there was some apparent misunderstanding in the local texts. For example, Daisy mistook the meaning of “minorities” as “ethnic groups,” so she wrote that “minority 民族” and “China—56 minority.” Based on this social action, the teacher repaired the parts that she didn’t explain explicitly and clearly.

Figure 2. The local texts from the bilingual emergent readers

Within nexus analysis, novice readers developed their historical bodies. They brought the “knowing” and “not-knowing” (Dressler, Crossman, & Kawalilak 2021) into their notes and how the world was conceptualized through certain words and their meaning (such as a melting pot). The discourses in place enriched by translingual notes indicated the students’ reader identity and their ways of thinking about L2 reading. When these aspects were combined within the nexus of practice of reading, then they could provide thoughtful insight into their development as readers and as future teaching practitioners.

Episode 5: Expanding cultural and linguistic repertoire through multimodality
Type 1: Topic-based extended literature reading in L1

At the beginning of the class, the teacher didn’t collect the students’ cell phones based on classroom regulations and allowed them to read three selected articles from the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) in L1 with an unfamiliar topic on their phone to deepen their
L2 comprehension. The use of cell phones traditionally formed part of activity outside the classroom. However, we might be interested to find out if there was any correlation between the students who often use advanced technology and their reading proficiency. As this translanguaging moment shown, instruction was supported using cell phones, i.e., using cell phones to mediate reading using translanguaging can achieve three aims. First, using cell phones can help the students integrate information from three journal articles on the same topic to talk about the reading subject thoroughly and knowledgeably. Second, it can facilitate the students’ ability to develop textual evidence from these informational texts in L1 input to support their analysis, reflection, and research in L2 output. Finally, it can benefit the students when they compare the views between more authors for how they treat similar topics and convey their points in detail in their respective accounts. In L2 reading, researching one topic in L1 can enrich the students’ understanding of the theme, help them make sense of new and complex information, deepen their connection to the professional texts, and increase their fluency in both L1 and L2 to expand their linguistic and cultural repertoire.

Type 2: Topic-based extended video watching with subtitles or voiceover in L1

Figure three showed a translanguaging moment that the teacher played a video clip about four Greek philosophers, including Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Diogenes, to fortify the students’ knowledge base and their cultural repertoire. The topic seemed to be so peculiar that the students didn’t even know how to read the names of these philosophers. In this vein, the teacher first spent a few minutes teaching pronunciation and then played as a voiceover to explain the content of the video clip in Chinese. In this way, the students learned about these philosophers and their thoughts. The newly built knowledge base helped students strengthen their confidence for reading the following long and complex text.

Using videos involving multimodality as both visual and audio means can bridge the gap between the institutional EMI policy and the diversified students in the classroom. A variety of historical bodies bring different backgrounds, beliefs, and personal attributes to a social action (Dressler et al., 2021). As each student’s linguistic and cultural knowledge is not necessarily self-sufficient, it is critical to meet the hierarchical needs of diversified readers. With the support of visual and audio means with subtitles in L1 and the teacher’s voiceover in L1 in L2 reading practice, the social side of translanguaging practice is again highlighted.

Figure 3. The teacher presenting a video clip with subtitles in L1 and playing as a voiceover
Episode 6: Improving L2 reading skills building on L1 reading skills

The following translanguaging moment showed that the students could use their existing knowledge of Chinese reading skills to conclude their steps of writing a summary of an English passage in L1 through contrastive analysis between Chinese and English. Within the translanguaging space, the students with low proficiency were able to experience the following process and achieve comprehension with moderate scaffolding: L1 input (the steps of summarizing a Chinese passage) → L1+L2 input (contrastive analysis of summarizing between two languages) → L1 output (presenting comprehension of summarizing an English passage in L1) → L2 output (talking about doing a summary of an English passage in L2 and producing it).

In this translanguaging practice, Chinese was used for various purposes. First, contrastive reading and analysis of reading skills, such as summarizing bilingually, can be seen as a pedagogical way to connect prior knowledge and new knowledge. A greater understanding of L1 reading skills can be positively transferred to L2. Second, the review of L1 reading skills can smoothly accelerate L2 learning and concept formation. Third, the students’ metalinguistic awareness can be enhanced by using one language to learn an additional language. Such translingual practice validates the pedagogical side of translanguaging.

Episode 7: Scaffolding well-being with a concise L1 summary of L2 the key points

We can see in the lesson excerpt (Appendix C) that the students were actively engaged in the discussion about how to summarize and paraphrase. The teacher was successful in alleviating her students’ L2 learning anxiety and getting her students engaged in negotiation, leading to improvement of the two English reading skills. In Turns 2, 10, and 14, we can see that Tom, Olivia, and Baby were so eager to convey their ideas that they repaired lexical gaps for not knowing the words and phrases, like “redundancy,” by providing the Mandarin Chinese equivalents to maintain their uninterrupted flow of ideas.

Additionally, the teacher strategically employed her shared mother tongue with the students to summarize and emphasize the critical points of summarizing and paraphrasing, like Turns 7, 17, 23 and 25. Through alternating Chinese and English for receptive or productive use in the English reading classroom, we also perceive the shift of the students’ wording from “globalization has advantages and disadvantages,” to “globalization has dual power,” and finally to “globalization is a double-edged sword.” They succeeded in coming up with English words and phrases in an animated translanguaging space that was co-constructed by both the teacher and themselves.

Episode 8: Managing classroom learning behavior by marking L1 as regulative talk

We also found that the teacher occasionally managed students’ classroom behavior in Chinese during class. We observed that the teacher didn’t collect the students’ cell phones before class because she shared an electronic reference book with Chinese translation. When she noticed a female student, Baby, holding and staring at her cell phone, she clapped her hands and spoke Chinese as regulative talk redirecting the student’s attention. This finding resonates with Chang (2009)’s view that the alternation of Chinese and English as dynamic use of language created a contrastive effect and plays a unique role to mark two types of classroom discourse, the teaching content and the teacher’s command, to get the attention of the distracted student.
A school supervisor’s regulative talk in Chinese also emerged in the present study. In Figure four, the supervisor was standing in the front of the classroom and giving some advice to the class after her classroom observation. From the above two examples, we can see language is not neutral. The intentional shift of medium of instruction and speaking L1 as regulative talk can also be used as authoritatively. This translanguaging practice is usually employed by educators who share the same mother tongue with their students.

Figure 4. The supervisor speaking regulative talk in Chinese to the students

Since space did not permit the presentation and discussion of all the 12 episodes, only some were elaborated. Other translanguaging moments involved enlivening the classroom climate by teasing in L1 (Episode nine), fostering reading by creating a sense of novelty using translanguaging (Episode 10), engaging students by creating a sense of immediacy using translanguaging (Episode 11), and supervising teaching behavior by reminding the teacher in L1 (Episode 12). However, it was worthwhile to note that the agency of the students was building and developing with the increasing awareness of principled translanguaging. In Episode 12, a female student called Mia kindly reminded her teacher to be careful with the excessive use of L1 in L2 reading. As García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) suggested, to establish a translanguaging classroom, a teacher needed to possess three strands of the translanguaging pedagogy, i.e., having a translanguaging stance, building a translanguaging design, and making translanguaging shifts. Mia’s action indexed the emergence of social equality and a democratic classroom. It was also the outcome of pedagogical translanguaging. In this co-established translanguaging space, the power of translanguaging gains influence.

Discussion

The findings through classroom observation present eight main episodes, which are indicative of eight translanguaging moments in real reading practice to enrich classroom discourse. These findings demonstrate that partial English medium instruction rather than total English immersion is typical in teaching practices. Reading using translanguaging is successful in reading practices among PUS in China. Facing the school’s EMI policy, Chinese PUS, as a community of low English proficiency, perceived that the requirement of the cognitively demanding reading tasks was acute and the reading strategies were informative, which was also found by Adamson and Coulson (2015).
However, the teacher and PUSs were not passive recipients. Their skillfully alternative use of Chinese and English for different functional goals (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) proves that translanguaging is a natural way (Williams, 2002) and an instinct (García & Li, 2014) for human beings to make meaning of the world. In our context, the teacher with a translanguaging stance allowed and encouraged PUS to deploy the alternation of languages in meaning negotiation. She believed that reading demanded the support of translanguaging to attend to reading the world. These findings align with Williams (2002). He noted that using translanguaging resources to foster reading development mainly lies in its contribution to increasing the students’ confidence to ask for a term, not allowing their limited vocabulary to inhibit their communication. Through translanguaging strategy, students can navigate online and offline reference materials and resources to find new words, to gather knowledge of new concepts, and to clarify the meanings. Furthermore, over time, the teacher and students oriented themselves better by using planned translanguaging to keep the pedagogic tasks moving and spreading (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

One critical takeaway from classroom observation is that taking a translanguaging stance is beneficial for students during the transitional stage towards other EMI reading practices. Therefore, we argue that translanguaging policy for emergent bilingual readers in a private university in China is more favorable than EMI policy and should be adopted and implemented widely. Chinese PUSs and their teacher are seeking to establish a unitary model for English reading development called unitary translanguaging theory (UTT) or crosslinguistic translanguaging theory (CTT) (Cummins, 2021b), in which pedagogical translanguaging is the legitimate classroom norm in a bilingual or multilingual context.

Additionally, the findings complement Adamson and Coulson (2015), who found that a hybrid of L2 and some L1 can enhance multimodality and autonomy. As the artifacts from the students and the classroom discourse show in the 12 episodes, the linguistically lower proficiency community not only could break the ice but also could articulate their views in L1, L2, both, and modes other than language as their holistic linguistic repertoire. Besides, PUS showed their autonomy through the principled use of Chinese references, glossaries, and notes as pre-reading and additional materials to localize themes, to figure out the challenging language points, and to acquire reading strategies at the very beginning guided by the teacher and later independently. Such a pragmatic use of L1 helped develop not only language and content but also independence in learning (García et al., 2017), which helped to meet the requirement of the course syllabus and pedagogical objectives.

Furthermore, learning to translanguage can facilitate the development of critical thinking among Chinese PUS, which can be explained in the following two aspects. First, engaging with bilingual texts for comparison and contrast can open a site of engagement for PUS to read rigorous texts in both L1 and L2 and critically evaluate their features in terms of messages and mediums. Second, judicious alternation of L1 and L2 can hone their reflection skills and raise their translanguaging awareness and metalinguistic awareness, which renders them able to achieve the synergetic development of L1 and L2. Such findings concur with the views of García and Li (2014).

Finally, administrators and teachers in this specific context should put more trust in students regarding the use of translanguaging resources, especially translate apps and the Internet on
smart phones. Their concern about the distraction of using smartphones during the class is unnecessary within a well-designed translanguaging classroom. If teachers can afford the space and resources and model how to use them, they can turn such “distractions” into effective mediational means that might open a translanguaging space for knowledge construction and communication.

Conclusion
The present study investigated the effects of translanguaging in a reading classroom at a private university in China. It mainly focused on the language users and their actions in reading using translanguaging. The data from classroom observation demonstrated that translanguaging as pedagogy plays a critical role in reading development, especially for emergent bilingual readers. Also, as shown from the data, natural translanguaging without interruption provided support for knowledge construction and communication. Planned translanguaging with intervention offered a space for translanguaging practice towards the discourse and cultural patterns demanded by the school for future social assessment and evaluation. During different development stages, translanguaging played different roles. In the natural translanguaging, they offered more emotional scaffolding for lessening students’ reading anxiety and frustration. In the planned translanguaging, they provided more academic and technical scaffolding. However, Chinese PUS’ concerns with natural translanguaging, such as excessive or unwitting use of L1, is a sad reflection of teachers’ and administrators’ ignorance of students’ diversified needs for planned and principled translanguaging, which should be examined and explored further. If teachers can introduce translanguaging practice in the preparation class or training before demanding reading tasks, they may scaffold students achieve academic success. Therefore, the present study recommends that a principled and systematic translanguaging approach should be established to reset the reading purposes, reading assessment, and reading outcomes in a more just world.

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References


Appendices

Appendix A

Transcription conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription conventions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[square brackets]</td>
<td>description of actions, comments and context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>rising intonation (indicating question)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>exclamation intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:: double-colon</td>
<td>overlapping speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>underline</td>
<td>word emphasized by the speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPS</td>
<td>Indicates shouting or raised volume of the speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>italics</td>
<td>translation/gloss of original text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(# seconds)</td>
<td>pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold type</td>
<td>highlighted for analytical purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>......</td>
<td>waiting for students to respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>???</td>
<td>waiting for the teacher to scaffold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Martin-Beltrán, 2010)

T teacher-researcher
S the students can’t be identified
Name the students who can be identified
SV the supervisor to do the classroom observation and give an evaluation to all the teachers during the mid-term check-up

Appendix B

Extract one. Eliciting more comprehensive answers by inserting more Chinese and English initiations into the typical interaction pattern IRE/F in the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Original Utterance (Transcript)</th>
<th>English Gloss/translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>What kind of village? What does the village look like?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Poor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>如果我们说这个国家很落后，尽量不用 poor，用哪个词更合适？</td>
<td>Could you please use an academic word instead of the word “poor”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Underdeveloped.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes, it’s an underdeveloped village. How underdeveloped? Could you please give a description about it? How underdeveloped, of this village?</td>
<td>Could you please make a description of it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>??? [Silence]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Underdeveloped 到什么程度呢？Who can describe it? 描述一下，OK? You can use the words in our text.</td>
<td>How underdeveloped? Could you please make a description of it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Yesterday, you described the village, right? How did you translate it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes, it’s a small village. What kind of a small village? 昨天你 [Point to Steve] 用了一个词语（来描述这个村子），你当时怎么翻译的？</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>“梯田环绕的，多石的山区。”(It's) a small Lebanese village in the terraced, rocky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mountains. Time didn’t mean much to anybody, except maybe to those who were dying.

### Appendix C

Extract two. Scaffolding well-being with concise L1 summary of L2 the key points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Original Utterance (Transcript)</th>
<th>English Gloss (when needed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>我发现TEM4对大家来说难通过，一个主要原因是，大家对summary, paraphrase和transediting的方法和步骤好像不是很熟悉。First, let’s talk about summary, what is the first step to do a summary?</td>
<td>It’s challenging for some of the students to pass TEM4. I found that the main reason is that we haven’t acquired the reading skills, like summarizing, paraphrasing and trans-editing. Omit the figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>把数字先划掉。</td>
<td>Omit the figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes, you need to delete all the……</td>
<td>Numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>需要删除所有数字。</td>
<td>Numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>什么样的“number”？</td>
<td>What does “number” refer to here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>例子.</td>
<td>Examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes, examples and instances. :: 例子. Next, go on……</td>
<td>Examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>引语。</td>
<td>Quotations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>引语。How to say (it)？</td>
<td>Quotations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Quotes, quotation.</td>
<td>Quotes, quotation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Omit. :: 划掉。Go on. What else? We need to omit……</td>
<td>Repetitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Baby</td>
<td>多余的话。</td>
<td>Repetitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes, redundant (words), redundancy. 重复的，冗余的话。Clear? Repeat my words. OK?</td>
<td>Repetitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes. Redundancy.</td>
<td>Repetitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>这些是最基本的，当然，还有其他细节，需要划去，比如修辞。这些都划掉，剩下的部分怎么办?</td>
<td>We have mentioned some details that we need to omit. Of course, we should also omit figures of speech. How about dealing with the rest part?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Paraphrase.</td>
<td>Paraphrase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>How to paraphrase?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Say your own words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes. How to paraphrase “Globalization has dual power”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Globalization is a double-edged sword. Well done!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>如果再遇到Globalization is a double-edged sword你可以把它转换成…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>T&amp;S</td>
<td>Globalization has dual power.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>如果说某事物的优缺点, 除了用advantages and disadvantages, 还可以用xxx is a double-edged sword或者用xxx has dual power.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you meet the sentence like “Globalization is a double-edged sword”, you can switch it into…

When you want to express the advantages and the disadvantages of something, you can also use the sentence pattern, like “xxx is a double-edged sword” or “xxx has dual power”.

When you meet the sentence like “Globalization is a double-edged sword”, you can switch it into…

When you want to express the advantages and the disadvantages of something, you can also use the sentence pattern, like “xxx is a double-edged sword” or “xxx has dual power”.
Cartoons as the Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition Tool for English Language Learners

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Abstract
Incidental learning is a well-known process of acquiring new knowledge, vocabulary, or information without intention. Traditional or intentional learning is widely practiced in classroom environments, while incidental one receives less attention from educators, schools, and scholars. English Language Learners encounter various problems when they start learning the second language, including culture shock, lack of understanding of foreign culture, different contexts, and ineffective teaching strategies implemented by teachers. Many English Language Learners cannot communicate in a second language outside the classroom, yet, they are exposed to a variety of media, including cartoons and animated films, when they are at home. By using cartoons as the means of incidental learning among English Language Learners to acquire second language vocabulary, students could learn a foreign language faster. The current paper critically analyzes the benefits of incidental learning, the evidence of its effective implementation in the classroom with English Language Learners, and the results of previous studies using cartoons as the method of incidental learning among students, including English Language Learners. The paper recommends using incidental learning as one of the strategies to acquire second language vocabulary among English Language Learners. However, teachers must pair this practice with intentional learning to retain the results. Also, it is recommended to use cartoons with subtitles for students with basic or limited knowledge of a second language for effective accommodation and scaffolding of English Language Learners in general classrooms.

Keywords: cartoons, children, English language learners, incidental learning, vocabulary acquisition

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Introduction

In most cases, education is a well-guided and monitored process where the teacher and the curriculum develop the instructions preapproved by the authorities. However, children can learn in other instances that do not require specific guidance or an educational curriculum. Specifically, incidental learning refers to the process of learning that does not have a goal of doing so. According to the definition of Richards and Schmidt (2002), incidental learning is learning one thing while intending to learn another. Children can learn from context, including their out-of-class experience, interaction with their peers, communication with family, and media consumption. English Language Learners (ELLs) could benefit from incidental learning, as acquiring new vocabulary from the context could be even more effective than learning new words in the classroom (Teng, 2020).

Moreover, ELLs often experience a lack of opportunities to learn a language in an English-speaking environment outside the classrooms, which is critical for acquiring vocabulary in a faster and more effective way. Young children are often exposed to various media types, from online social platforms to cartoons or animated motion pictures. While parents choose to limit the time children are exposed to media to preserve their health and maintain healthy physical and mental development, it is still possible to use this time to benefit children, especially those learning English as their second language. The main goal of this paper is to analyze the theoretical basis behind incidental learning and its efficacy for ELLs, review the literature on testing the effectiveness of cartoons as means of vocabulary acquisition, consider all advantages and disadvantages of this method of learning, and propose an approach for using this media as a teacher of vocabulary for young students. Finally, the paper analyzes the different types of evidence of benefits of incidental learning for ELLs for acquiring Second Language (L2) vocabulary.

Literature Review

This section analyzes the literature dedicated to incidental learning, the theories that serve as the basis for this practice, and the studies that tested this method of vocabulary acquisition in practice. The main purpose of this section is not only to present an overview of the previous research but also to analyze the evidence of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of incidental learning as a tool for vocabulary acquisition among ELLs. Theories that serve as the basis for incidental learning have to be analyzed as well to determine if this practice is based on a solid theoretical basis.

Theoretical Basis of Incidental Learning

Incidental learning sounds like a natural and straightforward process when children or adults could learn something from unintentional actions. However, this learning tool was proposed by Marsick and Watkins (1990) by calling it a theory of incidental or informal learning and contrasting it with formal (traditional) learning. According to their study, formal learning is a traditional institutionally-sponsored, classroom-based, and structured process, while informal learning can occur anytime anywhere, yet it is not typically classroom-based. Incidental learning could be a byproduct of unrelated activity, including personal interaction, communication activities, or task accomplishment (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Informal learning could be used by the teacher, parents, or organizations as a deliberate method of incidental learning, even if it could sound like mutually exclusive
actions (Marsick, Watkins, Callahan, & Volpe, 2006). However, according to this theory, incidental learning could be pre-planned. Incidental learning, however, could happen when learners are not conscious of it (Rosales, 2019).

At the same time, the theory by Marsick and Watkins (1990) was based on the theories of Dewey (1938) and Lewin (1951) as well as the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990). Particularly, John Dewey insisted that the curriculum has to be relevant to children, as they have to learn practical skills that could be useful for them in the future (Dewey, 1938). The main opposition of Dewey was directed towards the formal learning that usually demanded the development of a standard set of skills (e.g., reading, writing, and math). Instead, according to Dewey (1938), students have to be able to learn skills and acquire knowledge that reflects their environment and could be applicable in real life. In other words, Dewey (1938) insisted on the deviation from traditional formulaic learning that could increase children's interest in education and provide them with natural motivation to acquire knowledge. The scholar proposed investing more students' time in art, history, and science within the areas relevant to a specific group of children because, according to Dewey (1938), schools have to raise community members that could use effective self-direction and autonomous decision-making.

Kurt Lewin introduced a complex theory that implied that children could learn better in their environment. Moreover, Lewin (1951) claimed that every child's environment is individual and different, relying on individual behavior and psychological force, including drives, tensions, thoughts, and specific contexts. Lewin (1951) illustrated his theory through a diagram in which a learner remains at the center and moves through life-space that is constructed of facts that determine her or his behavior at a given time. This theory is closely connected to incidental learning, as it allows understanding how a child would learn by the incident and how this process could be re-constructed. In this case, an individual learner could be exposed to a situation where incidental learning is inevitable.

Another theory that could be closely linked to incidental learning is Jack Mezirow's transformative learning. While this theory was initially developed for adult learners, it could be applied to the perspective of teaching children, especially considering the ELLs, as they would have to go through the process of transformation to acquire new vocabulary (Mezirow, 1990). In other words, transformative learning is a concept implying that when learning, students could also develop their skills and acquire knowledge from context through a transformation process. In addition, transformative learning demands the new material to be based on the learners' previous experiences to connect them to the new knowledge (Mezirow, 1990). Incidental learning could be transformational for ELLs, as they have to change their linguistic patterns, learn how to comprehend, interpret, and analyze new language, retain foreign words, and use them in practice.

Cartoons as an Incidental Learning Tool

Exposure to the media of children could generate positive learning effects if this practice is used in an effective manner and concerning the children's developmental milestones, the time of exposure, and their attention span. For instance, a study by Rawan, Dar, and Siraj (2018) experimented on Pakistani children by using Japanese Hindi-dubbed
cartoons as the tool for Hindi language acquisition. The results determined the connection between the frequency of the use of Hindi words in cartoons and the expanded frequency of vocabulary acquisition by participants (Rawan et al., 2018). The same research confirmed that such indicators as age and gender determine the capacity of incidental learning, while the exposure time (to the cartoon) did not generate a significant link to learning new Hindi words (Rawan et al., 2018). This study confirmed the efficacy of cartoons as the means of learning new words among children who have just started learning the language. While this research was conducted among young children who learn their native language, the same process could be designed for ELLs as well. (Singer, 2019)

Earlier research was conducted among students who learn English as their second language. A study conducted by Mousavia and Gholami (2014) involved Iranian children who learn English to watch animated flash stories with English subtitles. The study compared the children's performance in English vocabulary acquisition when they watched the stories with the task they had only to read the subtitles. According to the findings, children were more prone to retain new words when watching the flash stories with subtitles (Mousavia and Gholami, 2014). Children may be prone to learn through cartoons or other visual media, as they use two means of perceiving information (visual and auditory). However, an earlier study conducted by Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua (2008) compared the possibility of incidental learning by using reading, reading-while-listening, and listening to the stories, which showed that the children do not incidentally learn in any of these modes. Thus, it is possible to speculate that this is the visual element of cartoons or animated films that stimulate incidental learning among young children (Chen, 2021). The use of both visual and auditory elements may affect young learners even more effectively.

Overall, like any other media, cartoons could be used for students' learning of new words in the classroom or outside of it. Munir (2016) analyzed the effectiveness of a cartoon as a tool in learning new vocabulary among ELLs. The results showed a significant increase of retained words by ELLs in the classroom when the teacher was using it as a primary method to stimulate vocabulary acquisition among students (Munir, 2016). While this study focuses on the controlled and instructed environment of the classroom, it is possible to notice that cartoons could be a viable option in generating language acquisition in an out-of-classroom environment. Torralba and Mazra (2015) determined new details on incidental learning through cartoons in ELLs by involving children from emigrant families of several age groups in the experiment. According to the study results, older children were mainly familiar with subtitles, and the acceptance was very high in all age groups (Torralba & Mazra, 2015).

Furthermore, the same research showed that the level of efficacy of incidental learning through cartoons was predetermined by habit, readability of subtitles, and level of interest in the cartoons (Torralba & Mazra, 2015). Not only could young children learn through cartoons, but all age groups could also retain vocabulary. Of course, the choice of the cartoons or animated series has to be connected to children's interests and comply with their developmental milestones. At the same time, subtitles are not always proved to be a more effective method to ensure a harmonious L2 acquisition. For example, Karakaş and Sariçoban (2012) tested on Turkish
children learning English by exposing them to a cartoon in English with and without subtitles. According to the findings of this study, the subtitle group did not outperform the no-subtitle group, yet, both groups showed significant results in L2 vocabulary retention in post-test results (Karakaş & Sariçoban, 2012). As the researchers concluded, the contextualization of target words in cartoons improved children's performance in both groups (Karakaş & Sariçoban, 2012). At the same time, it is critical to admit that using L2 cartoons without subtitles would require students to have a basic understanding of L2 or the cartoon's language to be adapted to ELLs. Otherwise, even if children are provided with the target words, they would not be able to understand or retain new vocabulary. Furthermore, incidental learning occurs unintentionally, yet, it is highly unlikely that children can acquire L2 vocabulary without understanding the meaning of words or phrases.

Specificities of Second Language Acquisition in English Language Learners

Acquiring knowledge about a new foreign language could be a challenging job for children who have just come to an environment with L2 (foreign language). Multiple reasons influence students' L2 learning. Specifically, ELLs' initial expertise in a second language could be limited or even inexistent. Also, children's L1 (native language) could be dramatically distinctive compared to L2. Finally, teachers could use an ineffective practice for learning L2 in the classroom by ignoring the needs of ELLs from different countries. Differences between L1 and L2 could be dramatic in terms of the alphabet, grammar, stylistics, pronunciation, as well as culture, values, and traditions that exist in every language as a code. For example, the difference between English and Chinese is severer compared to Italian and Spanish languages based on the Latin alphabet (Teng, 2015).

For a very long time, the only method used in classrooms for ELLs was a monolingual strategy that eliminated L2 from the context of the lessons. This approach was based on the idea that students would learn L2 quicker if provided with the so-called immersive experience and would be surrounded by L2 most of the time in classrooms. As many ELLs are deprived of interacting with native speakers in an out-of-classroom environment, such an approach could sound viable. Nonetheless, recently, educators began to acknowledge the efficiency of the multilingual teaching technique for ELLs to accommodate the learners.

The multilingual approach permits educators to utilize L1 in the class when it is needed. For instance, a study conducted by Alrabah, Wu, Alotaibi, & Aldaihani (2015) revealed a significant connection between a multilingual approach and the efficacy of L2 acquisition in the classroom. At the same time, this study showed that the teachers were initially against using L1 in the classroom opposite to L2. A negative attitude towards the bilingual approach was connected to the lack of knowledge and practice among teachers in using this teaching method in the classroom (Alrabah et al., 2015). ELLs acquire new vocabulary by being exposed to L2 as well as being able to understand new words, structures, and phrases. If ELLs are surrounded with L2 without the provision of explanation of interpretation of the context, it is more likely that they would fail to recognize or retain new words. Incidental learning would not be able in this case.

The negative attitude of teachers towards the use of L1 in the classroom would prevent students from accepting an immersive strategy outside of it. One more research came
to the same final thought by establishing that educators have a debatable understanding of the multilingual method as a result of their training (De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009). A research study by Murga (2018) recognized that most teachers ban L1 from the classroom because they either did not understand it or were sure that it would hinder students who learn English from acquiring new knowledge. Incidental learning could not be used to acquire new vocabulary if students were unable to understand L2 through their native language. ELLs with basic or no comprehension of L2 might not be able to perceive new vocabulary in full capacity. Educators who do not understand the importance of using L1 could be unaware of how language is acquired. As a result, it is critical to determine if the methods of vocabulary acquisition in ELLs could be connected to their ability to understand L2 and learn incidentally (Huber, 2000).

Numerous studies recognized the advantages of using L1 among ELLs concerning their academic effectiveness and benefit of the understanding process. Specifically, Boutsani (2019) generated the findings that claimed L1 for ELLs lowers talking anxiety among them, which fosters much better cause their vocabulary purchase, especially among children who struggle. Other advantages of implementing L1 included improvement of knowledge building and construction in L2, facilitation of social interaction, and also an increase in language effectiveness (Pan & Pan, 2018). Furthermore, it was acknowledged that pupils’ language understanding is better supported by the use of L1 in the classroom in certain scenarios (Almoayidi, 2018). Particularly, as it was admitted, L1 needs to be used in the class when needed by the scenario rather than replacing TL2 completely (Almoayid, 2018). Zaboli and Bozorgian (2017) showed a clear connection between the effectiveness of incidental learning and vocabulary acquisition among ELLs during the intensive reading exercise, even when the students were not provided with explicit instructions concerning the words they have to retain. Figure 1 shows the difference between pre-and post-test results:

![Incidental Learning in ELLs](Zaboli & Bozorgian, 2017, p. 74)

This is the main issue that ELLs classroom instructors are saying, as they consider that the inclusion of L1 would certainly supersede L2 as well as lower the top quality of language understanding completely. Numerous research studies agreed that L1 has to be used just
when it is needed (e.g., when a student stops working to understand a new term) rather than carried out as a substitute in the EFL class (Al-Musawi, 2014; Galali & Cinkara, 2017). Really few studies revealed that EFL instructors authorize the use of L1 in the classroom (Jadallah & Hasan, 2014). Subsequently, the use of a bilingual training technique is warranted only when it is applied correctly in the classroom. At the same time, the reluctance of instructors to make use of L1 is connected to several problems.

**Incidental Learning among ELLs**

Vocabulary acquisition through incidental learning among ELLs is an effective method of increasing the capacity of words and phrases in students' lexicon. A study on incidental learning among English speakers who learn Russian showed that the participants were able to improve their receptive but not productive grammatical knowledge in L2 (Russian) acquisition (Denhovska & Serratrice, 2017). It would be challenging for ELLs to perceive and retain correct grammar structures during incidental learning, which explains the results of this study. Bisson et al. (2014) recommended exposing ELLs to media that aims at incidental learning at least two times for their effective L2 vocabulary acquisition. Students who learn L2 tend to acquire and retain new vocabulary with repetition, which is already a well-known fact. At the same time, repetition of the same media might not constitute incidental learning but rather the purposeful one, as children are already familiar with the material. The following Figure shows the difference among the sources of incidental, intentional, and informal learning practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Incidental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum texts;</td>
<td>• Blogs, wiki pages;</td>
<td>• Cartoons, animated films;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adapted auditory sources;</td>
<td>• Web-based games, online games;</td>
<td>• Fiction movies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visual boards and presentations.</td>
<td>• Mobile applications.</td>
<td>• Interaction with parents, peers, others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Comparison among modes of vocabulary acquisition*

The effectiveness of incidental learning among ELLs might depend on the means and the environment of children. Also, ELLs could be required to learn a certain type of words or develop a specific vocabulary during educational practice. For instance, Ahmed (2017) compared incidental and intentional learning strategies among ELLs in their ability to retain the new words. The results showed that intentional learning was more effective compared to the incidental one (Ahmed, 2017). Furthermore, the number of words memorized by ELLs during incidental learning was larger compared to the number retained during the incidental learning practice (Ahmed, 2017). This result is viable, and it evidences the significance of intentional learning versus the incidental one in terms of the educational goals (Journal et al., 2018). However, as it was noticed earlier, intentional traditional learning is deeply instructive and controlled, with educators having clear educational goals requiring students to learn specific vocabulary structures. Incidental learning does not have such a goal, as children could learn vocabulary without pressure or an intention to learn or memorize
It is challenging to measure incidental learning and its outcomes since the students usually do not plan to engage in the learning activity. However, inquiries involved in neuroscience attempt to shed light on the efficacy of incidental learning when this experience is not monitored. For example, a study analyzing the neuroscientific explanation of incidental learning among students showed that during this practice, frontal lobe parts of the brain are engaged after learning (Luthra et al., 2019). The study used functional MRI scans that linked the ability to retain novel phonetic category information to the function of frontal brain regions, even when students were not provided explicit category labels (Luthra et al., 2019).

Another study exploring the connection between incidental learning among ELLs and their brain functions by using online video games showed that learners' striatum is engaged during incidental learning (Lim et al., 2019). The striatum is a part of the human brain, which is a critical element of motor and reward systems. Lim et al. (2019) recognized that participants were able to incidentally learn auditory categories during videogame play without direct attention to them, the striatum was engaged during this practice, and the control of striatal activity and connectivity differed in both experimental and control groups, which evidenced the sensitivity of the striatal learning system. The results of both Luthra et al. (2019) and Lim et al. (2019) confirmed the efficacy of incidental learning at the level of brain functions that emphasizes the viability of this method as means of vocabulary acquisition. All of these studies showed that the use of incidental learning among ELLs is an effective approach when acquiring new L2 vocabulary.

Discussion of Literature

Direct exposure to the media of youngsters can generate positive learning results if this method is utilized reliably and also worrying the children's developmental landmarks, the moment of exposure, as well as their focus period. For example, a study by Rawan et al. (2018) explored Pakistani youngsters by utilizing Japanese Hindi-dubbed animes as Hindi language acquisition tools. The outcomes established the link between the regularity of using Hindi words in cartoons as well as the expanded frequency of vocabulary procurement by participants (Rawan et al., 2018). The same research study verified that such indications as age as well as gender establish the capacity of subordinate understanding, while the direct exposure time (to the cartoon) did not create a significant link to finding out new Hindi words (Rawan et al., 2018). This research verified the effectiveness of animations as the methods of learning new words amongst children that just begun discovering the language. While this research study was performed among little ones who discover their native language, the same process could be developed for ELLs as well.

Earlier research was carried out among trainees that find out English as their second language. A study conducted by Mousavia and Gholami (2014) included Iranian kids who discover English to see animated flash tales with English subtitles. The research study compared the kids' efficiency in English vocabulary purchase when they saw the tales with the task they needed to just check out the captions. According to the findings, children were much more susceptible to keeping new words when enjoying the flash tales with subtitles.
(Mousavia & Gholami, 2014). Children may be prone to learn through cartoons or various other aesthetic media, as they use two information methods (aesthetic and acoustic). However, an earlier research study conducted by Brown et al. (2008) contrasted the possibility of subordinate learning by using analysis, reading-while-listening, as well as listening to the stories, which revealed that the kids do not incidentally find out in any one of these settings. Therefore, it is feasible to guess that this is the visual element of the animations or computer-animated movies that boost subordinate learning among young kids. Using both visual as well as auditory aspects may impact young students a lot more successfully (Chang & Ma, 2018).

**Conclusion**

On the whole, cartoons, like any other media, could be used to understand new words in the classroom or beyond it. Munir (2016) examined the performance of an anime as a device in discovering brand-new vocabulary amongst ELLs. The outcomes revealed a significant boost of retained words by ELLs in the classroom when the teacher was utilizing it as a main technique to stimulate vocabulary purchase amongst students (Munir, 2016). While this research concentrates on the managed and advised environment of the class, it is possible to discover that animes could be a viable alternative in creating language acquisition in an out-of-classroom atmosphere. Torralba and Mazra (2015) established brand-new details on subordinate learning through animations in ELLs by including right into the experiment kids from emigrant families of several age groups. According to the results of the study, older kids were primarily accustomed to subtitles as well, as the approval was extremely high in all ages (Torralba & Mazra, 2015).

Furthermore, the same study revealed that the level of effectiveness of incidental understanding via animes was predetermined by behavior, readability of captions, and also the level of interest in the cartoons (Torralba & Mazra, 2015). Not just young kids can learn through cartoons, but every age group can also retain vocabulary. The animations or animated series option has to be linked to youngsters' interests and comply with their developmental milestones (Singer, 2022).

At the same time, captions are not constantly shown to be an extra reliable technique to ensure a harmonious foreign language (L2) purchase. As an example, Karakaş and Sariçoğan (2012) explored Turkish kids learning English by revealing them to an anime in English with and also without subtitles. According to the findings of this research, the subtitle team did not outshine the no-subtitle team, yet, both teams revealed considerable lead to L2 vocabulary retention in post-test outcomes (Karakaş & Sariçoğan, 2012). As the researchers ended, the contextualization of target words in cartoons supported an improvement in kids' efficiency in both groups (Karakaş & Sariçoğan, 2012). At the same time, it is important to confess that using L2 animations without subtitles would require trainees to have a standard understanding of L2 or the cartoon's language to be adapted to ELLs. Otherwise, even if children are supplied with the target words, they would certainly not have the ability to comprehend or preserve new vocabulary. Incidental discovery happens accidentally, yet, it is very unlikely that youngsters can obtain L2 vocabulary without understanding the meaning of words or phrases.
The performance of subordinate understanding among ELLs could depend upon the means as well as the environment of children. Likewise, ELLs could be needed to discover a particular kind of words or create a specific vocabulary during the educational method. For instance, Ahmed (2017) compared incidental as well as deliberate learning approaches among ELLs in their ability to retain the new words. The results showed that deliberate learning was much more reliable compared to the subordinate one (Ahmed, 2017). The variety of words memorized by ELLs throughout subordinate knowing was wider contrasted to the number retained during the subordinate discovering method (Ahmed, 2017). This outcome is feasible, and it proves the value of willful learning versus the subordinate one in terms of the instructional objective.

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Cartoons as the Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition Tool

Singer


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The Impact of Raising Awareness of Arabic and English Word Order Differences on Arabs’ English Use

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Abstract
English is a language with a rigid word order, whereas Arabic is more flexible. Canonical English word order is often a challenge for users whose first language is flexible. This study explores how Arabic learners transfer their knowledge of Arabic word order styles into the English language, and it compares Arabic learners’ use of English word order before and after raising learners’ awareness of Arabic and English word order differences. The significance of this study is manifested in its employment of both Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis to determine priorities for efforts. The study employed an action research design to investigate the impact of adapting Galperin’s teaching model alongside explicit teaching of differences in Arabic and English word order. Four Arabic English language teachers and 142 Saudi students participated in the present study. The participating students were taking a beginning-level English course at a Saudi university. Through mixed-method approaches, the findings of the pretest and posttest showed that some learners used their knowledge and experience of Arabic standard and slang word order to compose sentences in English. This study concludes that the intervention helps Arabic learners avoid committing word order errors, as the posttest scores are better than the pretest scores at a statistically significant level.

Keywords: awareness, contrastive analysis, error analysis, interference errors, teaching word order, typological differences

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Introduction

The linguistic production of English language learners is influenced either positively or negatively by their First Language (L1) (Bukhari, 2019; Kasper, 1992). Knowledge of previously acquired languages may affect the learning process of another language (Bukhari, 2019). Behaviourists believe that the habits, forms, and patterns of L1 are carried over into another language (Lado, 1957). Odlin (1989) described language transfer as the influence that results from similarities and differences between the target language and previously acquired languages. Language transfer in the process of second language learning is defined as the use of the characteristics of L1 in the acquisition of the target language (Gass & Selinker, 1992). The role of L1 transfer in language learning has long been a controversial issue in applied linguistics. In the 1980s, the role of language transfer in language learning was acknowledged by many researchers, such as Kellerman, Smith, Ringbom, and Odlin (Temime, 2010). According to contrastive analysis hypothesis, language transfer is considered positive when the similarities between the prior language and the target language facilitate the learning process (Weinreich, 2011). Corder (1983) pointed out that learners easily master the target language through positive language transfer when the patterns or syntactic features of L1 and the target language are identical or similar. Language transfer is called ‘L1 interference’ when the dissimilarities between the prior language and the target language hinder the acquisition process (Odlin, 1989; Ringbom, 1992; Weinreich, 2011). In contrastive analysis approaches, learners’ errors are viewed as an outcome of the differences between the two language structures (Temime, 2010). Perkins and Salomon (1992) asserted that it is easier for users of a certain language to learn another syntactically related language than to learn a syntactically unrelated language.

However, these views have been questioned by some scholars because the differences between L1 and the target language do not always highlight particular difficulties in language learning (Grami & Alzughaibi, 2012). Still, many studies reported L1 interference as one of the sources of language learners’ errors in syntactic production. For instance, Torrijos (2009) gave an English vocabulary test to Spanish students. The error analysis of the students’ answers showed that the Spanish students did well with the English words whose spellings were identical or similar to words in the Spanish language. The syntactic and semantic similarities between some English and Spanish words positively facilitated the learning process. The syntactic properties of English and Arabic languages are different (Hanania & Gradman, 1977; Li & Thompson, 1976; Tomlin, 1986). Temime (2010) investigated the transfer of simple prepositions from Standard Arabic into English by Algerian learners. A fill-in-the-blank test with simple prepositions was given to 30 learners. Contrastive analysis and error analysis approaches were then used to explore types, reasons, and sources of the learners’ errors. The results showed that Algerian learners used their knowledge from French, Standard Arabic, and Algerian Arabic to use prepositions in English. Consequently, Algerian learners made some of the same errors caused by the negative transfer from Arabic and French. Al-Jarf (2007) and Grami and Alzughaibi (2012) recommended English language teachers explicitly address differences between Arabic and English to make learners aware of errors they commit due to L1 interference. Igolkina (2018) argued that differences in word order typology between L1 and the target language should be taught explicitly. However, such recommendations of previous studies have not been seriously considered in the actual classroom environment (Grami & Alzughaibi, 2012). When the present study’s researcher began to investigate this topic in depth, it became...
apparent that not many studies in this area of research had been conducted in the Arabic context. The significant of this study is manifested in its employment of an error analysis and contrastive analysis while filling such a literature gap.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how adapting Galperin’s teaching model alongside explicit teaching of differences in Arabic and English word order impacts the learners’ skills in using English word order. The main objective of this study is to compare Arabic learners’ use of English word order before and after raising learners’ awareness of Arabic and English differences in word order. For this objective, the study employed an action research design and proposed two research questions:

- How does Arabic word order influence Arabic learners’ skills of composing English sentences?
- Is there any statistically significant difference in the tests’ scores before and after raising learners’ awareness of Arabic and English differences in word order?

Finding answers for these research questions contributes in proposing suitable recommendations for improving English teaching techniques.

**Literature Review**

*Contrastive Analysis vs. Error Analysis*

Contrastive Analysis is an approach that aims to make language learning and teaching more effective by determining the cross-linguistic differences in second-language learning. This approach assumes that learners transfer forms of their previously acquired languages to the target language (Lado, 1957). The strong version of Contrastive Analysis claims that difficulties in learning a target language may be predicted by identifying the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and other linguistic differences between L1 and the target language (Schachter, 1974). The weak version of Contrastive Analysis claims that a particular structure in L1 should be analysed if language learners commonly make a specific type of error in constructing a particular structure in the target language (Torrijos, 2009). Contrastive analysis studies claim that errors in the target language can be predicted by identifying the differences between forms and patterns in L1 and the target language. As discussed by Grami and Alzugaibi (2012), contrastive analysis studies consist of four common procedures: description of the two languages, selection of a certain item for comparison, identification of areas of difference and similarity, and prediction. The present followed these procedures. Then, it analysed the participants’ actual errors in the light of the contrastive analysis predictions.

Traditional contrastive analysis approaches have mainly been criticised because they do not study the actual errors made by language learners (Temime, 2010). As an alternative approach, Error Analysis analyses learners’ actual errors and explores the reasons and sources for those errors (Temime, 2010). Error analysis hypothesis claims there are different sources of language learners’ errors, such as L1 interference, teaching strategies, learning resources, and developmental progress in acquiring the target language. According to error analysis approaches, there is a distinction between errors and mistakes (Grami & Alzugaibi, 2012). Mistakes are tongue slips, whereas errors are systematic and may occur frequently. There are multiple
different error analysis models present in the research. Corder’s (1975) error analysis model consists of three phases: data collection, description, and explanation. Ellis’s (1996) error analysis model consists of four phases: data collection, classification of errors, analysing each error, and explanation for each type of error (James, 2013). Gass and Selinker’s (1994) error analysis model consists of six phases: data collection, identification and classification of errors, quantifying errors, analysing sources of errors, and remediation of errors (Gass, 2017). Error analysis approaches focus on learners’ actual errors, but they do not track when learners correctly produce a specific form or when learners avoid using a particular form. The present study employed both Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis to complement each other. It followed Grami and Alzughaibi’s (2012) contrastive analysis procedures to make predictions. Then, it followed Gass and Selinker’s (1994) error analysis model. The predictions made by Contrastive Analysis were checked by the results obtained from Error Analysis. In other words, Contrastive Analysis was used as a part of the explanatory stage in Error Analysis.

**Arabs’ Errors in English Word Order**

Previous research documented the influence of Arabic language on English language (Bukhari, 2019). This study focuses on word order language transfer from Arabic into English. The notions of ‘errors’ and ‘interference’ have long been a controversial issue in studies of World Englishes, which differentiate between errors and variants (Bukhari, 2019). Errors are divergent usages from Anglophone English usages, and they do not have any sociolinguistic or sociocultural justifications in research. Variants are different usages from standard English models and Anglophone English usages, but research could document their sociolinguistic and sociocultural justifications. Research on World Englishes and English as lingua franca has positively described such variants as a purposeful transfer. Based on Kachru’s (1992) distinction between errors and variants, Bukhari (2019) described English variants of Saudi users of English, none of which includes Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order. Accordingly, Saudis’ misalignments with English SVO word order are viewed as errors resulting from negative language transfer or low language proficiency.

Tomlin (1986) defined word order as the order of subject (S), verb (V), and object (O) in a basic sentence and defined word order typology as the study of distinguishing languages according to the preferred word order employed by each language. Based on these definitions, there are six possible word orders for basic sentences: SVO, VSO, SOV, OVS, VOS, and OSV. Most languages use SVO and SOV word order, though a significant number of languages employ VSO word order. VOS, OSV, and OVS word orders are rare (Tomlin, 1986). Li and Thompson’s typology (1976) classified languages into subject-prominent languages, such as English, topic-prominent languages such as Mandarin, both subject- and topic-prominent languages such as Arabic, and neither subject- nor topic-prominent languages such as Tagalog. Subject-prominent languages put the doer of the action first, whilst topic prominent languages put the topic first. English is subject prominent, but Arabic is both subject and topic prominent.

English word order can be a challenging issue for those learners whose L1 word order is more flexible (Igolkina, 2018). English is a rigid SVO word order language, whereas Arabic is more flexible. Arabic arranges elements within sentences according to pragmatics, and the choice between SVO and VSO is related to the context (Al-Jarf, 2007). In general, Arabic users prefer
The Impact of Raising Awareness of Arabic and English Word Order Differences

VSO unless there is a purpose for shifting from VSO to SVO (Abdul-Raof, 2013). Through conducting a translation test and translation projects, Al-Jarf (2007) collected an error corpus of deviant SVO structures. Data were collected from Arabic senior undergraduates at a Saudi university. The findings revealed that Arabic undergraduates encountered serious challenges in English word order. Al-Jarf (2007) recommended English language teachers raise learners’ awareness of Arabic and English differences in word order. The present study puts some of these recommendations into practice and utilizes the collected error corpus to capture SVO deviations. In addition, it investigates whether raising awareness of possible word order errors improves Arabic learners’ English use.

Raising Awareness of English Word Order

In the field of English language teaching, the method of teaching grammar is a controversial topic for researchers. Plenty of theories have been proposed to carry out different approaches to teaching grammar and evaluating the language learning process (Andrews, 2007). Despite being an antiquated practice, choosing between explicit and implicit grammar teaching approaches is still a questionable topic for many linguists (Altun & Dincer, 2020; Andrews, 2007; Hammerly, 1975). In explicit grammar teaching, teachers explain the rules directly, provide examples, and give learners the opportunity to practice until the rule is fully acquired (Krashen, 1982; Nazari, 2013; Nunan, 1994). In implicit grammar teaching, teachers bring sentences from authentic texts, and learners deduce the rules without consciousness (Andrews, 2007). Andrews (2007) studied the effects of grammar instruction on 70 school students. The findings showed that explicit instruction is significantly better than implicit in terms of complex structures. Altun and Dincer (2020) compared these two methods in terms of grammar success. A total of 40 intermediate university students participated in their study. The findings revealed that the explicit group made fewer grammar errors than the implicit group. Implicit and explicit teaching methods have been frequently studied in the field of English language teaching, and their advantages and disadvantages have been documented by previous research (Altun & Dincer, 2020). As ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy is questioned, and multilingualism frameworks are taken into consideration, Bukhari (2019) argued that choosing a particular teaching approach depends highly on the context. In other words, what suits a particular group in a particular place at a particular time and with a particular purpose may not suit another group with different circumstances and settings.

When it comes to teaching English word order to Arabs, Al-Jarf (2007) and Grami and Alzughaibi (2012) recommended English language teachers explicitly address Arabic and English differences in word order. Traditional English language teaching methods and materials aim at a wider audience than Arabic users. Therefore, the particular differences between English and Arabic word order are not specifically addressed. Belmonte (1999) carried out a qualitative analysis of English compositions written by Spanish students and reported their most common problems concerning word order. Didactic lines of action were suggested to improve students’ awareness of English word order. The suggestions include word arrangement and information gap activities. To familiarise students with English word order, Bardovi-Harlig (1990) developed a domino game. Igolkina (2018) discussed difficulties Russians find in English word order. To cope with such difficulties, the use of Galperin’s teaching model was proposed. This model consists of four phases: orientation, communicated thinking, dialogical thinking, and acting mentally (Haenen, 2001). The orientation phase provides learners with all the information.
necessary for the correct execution of a new action. The communicated thinking phase encourages the learners to think loudly about the new action as they perform it. During the dialogical thinking phase, the action becomes more routine. In the acting mentally phase, the action becomes almost automatic. The present study employed Galperin’s teaching model to habituate learners to English word order. To contribute to the automaticity of English word order, Igolkina (2018) suggested specific activities such as rearranging words, use of substitution tables, sentence building activities, transformation exercises, discussion of emphatic word arrangement in English, and speech production with support on given schemes.

**Methods**

This project aims to compare Arabic learners’ use of English word order before and after raising learners’ awareness of Arabic and English differences in word order. For this purpose, the study employed an action research design. Such a research design helps in bridging the gap between pedagogical theories and professional practices by improvising current practices.

**Participants**

The project employed Quota sampling technique. A total of 142 Saudi students participated in the present study. The students were taking a beginning-level English course at a Saudi university during the first term of the academic year 2021/2022. Students were divided into four groups. Each group was taught by a different Arabic teacher of English. The four teachers volunteered to conduct the intervention.

**Research Instruments**

A pretest–posttest design was incorporated to capture changes. Both tests were conducted using Google forms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each test consisted of two parts: a translation section and a jumbled-words section. Each section consisted of two items. In each item, students were asked to categorise each word as a subject, verb, or object and provide an Arabic equivalent or English synonym for it. Because all students were at a beginner level, the tests included only simple positive active declarative sentences. Given the limitedness of tests in data collection or in covering all aspects of the research phenomenon, the conclusion section proposes additional research instruments which can be adopted in future studies.

**Research Procedures**

The participants signed information and consent forms. The intervention took 50 minutes per day and lasted for 10 days. Before the intervention process, the teachers were guided to use both Arabic and English languages to directly and explicitly teach Arabic and English differences in word order. In addition, the teachers were guided to discuss with their students anticipated L1 interference errors in word order and employ Galperin’s teaching model to habituate learners to English word order. All procedures were exclusively conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants with incomplete answers and semantic errors were excluded, leaving 123 participants included in the present study. Errors in spelling, tense, and subject–verb agreement were neglected as they are not within the interest of the present study. Answers were categorised based on word order styles. SPSS version 23.0 was employed to analyse the data. Percentages, means, degrees of freedom, and standard deviations were used to describe the variables. The
paired t test was conducted to test the variance between pretest and posttest scores. A p value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Findings

Table one answers the first research question. Overall, it shows that 65.04% of the pretest participants used SVO style to compose sentences in English, while 15.65% of the participants used VSO, as preferred in standard Arabic. The rest (19.31%) of the participants used OVS and OSV, as used in slang Arabic.

Table 1. Pretest responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word-order styles in responses</th>
<th>Examples from the data</th>
<th>%Responses to Item 1</th>
<th>%Responses to Item 2</th>
<th>%Responses to Item 3</th>
<th>%Responses to Item</th>
<th>%Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SVO</td>
<td>‘Lana prepares the meal’.</td>
<td>60.16</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>69.92</td>
<td>67.48</td>
<td>65.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>‘Cooking Lana food’.</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>11.38</td>
<td>17.88</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>15.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVS</td>
<td>‘the meal made it Lana’.</td>
<td>17.07</td>
<td>17.89</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>‘The dishes lanah baiks them’.</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>6.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table two, the intervention helped in improving the skill of using English word order, as 77% of the posttest participants used SVO style to compose sentences in English, while 9.55% of the participants used VSO, as preferred in standard Arabic. The rest (13.42%) of the participants used OVS and OSV, as used in slang Arabic.

Table 2. Posttest responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word-order styles in responses</th>
<th>Examples from the data</th>
<th>%Responses to Item 1</th>
<th>%Responses to Item 2</th>
<th>%Responses to Item 3</th>
<th>%Responses to Item 4</th>
<th>%Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SVO</td>
<td>‘Ahmed closed the doors’.</td>
<td>71.54</td>
<td>73.17</td>
<td>80.49</td>
<td>82.92</td>
<td>77.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>‘Cloz Amad doors’.</td>
<td>8.94</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>11.38</td>
<td>10.57</td>
<td>9.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVS</td>
<td>‘a door Ahemd is close it’.</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>13.82</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>8.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>‘the doors ahmd shut it’.</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table three, there is a statistically significant difference (t = −5.49, df = 122, p > 0.001) between the pretest mean score (2.60 ± 1.82) and the posttest mean score (3.08 ± 1.56).

Table 3. Statistical significance of the difference between the pretest and posttest scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Statistics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>-5.49***</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p≤0.001
Discussion

In line with the studies of Hanania and Gradman (1977), Ouhalla (1994), Al-Jarf (2007), and Temime (2010), this study reveals that Arabic learners transfer their knowledge and experience of Arabic standard and slang word order styles into the English language. Based on Al-Jarf’s (2007) error corpus of Arabs’ deviant SVO structures, there are three explanations for the participants’ errors in the present study: inability to account for word order differences in both languages, tendency to translate word-by-word rather than by meaning, and/or inadequate competence in Arabic. The pretest and posttest findings showed that participants used SVO, VSO, OVS, and OSV to construct English sentences.

In line with the findings of Andrews (2007) and Altun and Dincer (2020), the present study’s findings show that explicit teaching of the differences in word order typology between L1 and the target language improved the learners’ skills in using English word order, as the improvement in the posttest scores over the pretest scores is statistically significant. This finding indicates that explicit teaching of differences in Arabic and English word order alongside employment of Galperin’s teaching model could help Arabic learners avoid committing word order errors.

Conclusion

This action research aims to examine the impact of raising awareness of Arabic and English differences in word order on learners’ skills in using English SVO word order. Of the 142 Saudi undergraduates who participated in the present study, only 123 participations were included. The pretest and posttest findings showed that participants used SVO, VSO, OVS, and OSV to construct English sentences. Employment of Galperin’s teaching model alongside explicit teaching of differences in Arabic and English word order could improve the learners’ skills in using English word order, as the improvement in the posttest scores over the pretest scores is statistically significant. As the COVID-19 pandemic hindered classroom observations and face-to-face procedures, future studies are recommended to observe learners while conducting the intervention. In addition, it would be useful to conduct interviews and focus groups with the teachers and the students. Given that this study focuses on beginning learners and simple structures, future studies may replicate this study with advanced learners and complex structures. Moreover, future studies may investigate these issues in oral discourse.

Linguists and applied linguists identify the similarities and differences between L1 and the target language, analyse errors made by a specific group of learners, and diagnose learners’ problems accurately (Banathy, Trager & Waddle, 1966). The task of teachers is to be aware of these differences and similarities and to be prepared to teach them by using suitable teaching techniques. Language teachers can capitalise on teaching any similarities between L1 and the target language and explicitly elicit awareness of differences between the two languages. Teachers may use the translation method to illustrate specific interference errors (Al-Jarf, 2007) and devote more time to delineating items and points in the target language that differ from the learners’ L1 (Corder, 1975). Doing so can help students recognise the problems whenever they occur, which in turn helps students avoid committing interference errors (Grami & Alzughaiibi, 2012). Curriculum designers may develop tests, syllabi, textbooks, and course materials which are based on similarities and differences between L1 and the target language (Banathy et al.,...
1966; Lado, 1957). As suggested by Richards and Sampson (1974), educational evaluators can assess textbooks, curricula, teachers’ performance, learners’ performance, teaching methods, test techniques, language programmes, classroom activities, and assignments on the basis of the results of an error analysis and contrastive analysis to determine priorities for future efforts.

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References


Questioning Intercultural Communication Skills Absence in Five Algerian Universities Digital Challenge

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Abstract:
COVID-19 pandemic has had a hard impact on all educational sectors where access to schools, educational institutions, and university campuses is forcibly halted. In this context, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research urged teachers to move from face-to-face to online learning to mitigate the spread of the virus, keep up the regular schedule and save the academic year. This paper highlights the issues, perspectives, and pedagogical practices of the instructors’ overnight change, switching pre-existing face-to-face learning to the online environment. It also refers to the challenge of those learners lacking intercultural communication skills needed to participate virtually. The researchers used the documentary research method to develop their leading research question and analyse existing research documents and other e-sources of information such as university and government reports, newspapers, PDF books, papers, and YouTube channels to collect relevant data for this study. As a result, we could illustrate the Algerian universities’ response and analyse government and university sources such as newspaper articles and ministry decrees. Therefore, we believe that the emergency to digitalize teaching in our higher institutions is a significant opportunity to keep engaged in the online environment now and after the pandemic and take advantage of the universities’ best pedagogical practices. Thus, prepare for the online shift to better address the digital divide by promoting equal opportunities for all students to access the Internet, possess and effectively use Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) to fully participate in the modern educational system.

Keywords: Algerian universities, Covid-19 pandemic, intercultural communication, online learning, pedagogical practices

Introduction

The silently devastating COVID-19 pandemic is the latest most severe health crisis of the 21st century. As COVID-19 health emergency continues because of the increasing number of infected cases, the ministry of higher education announced cancelling all face-to-face classes by converting content to an online environment starting from April 5, after spring break. However, in this sudden shift, academics who have never taught online face a real challenge by transitioning in-person courses to the online environment. The second challenge is to help learners develop intercultural communication skills, mainly those with the least access to technology.

Educators across the country have gone above and beyond always to reach out and teach their students, which is a real test for them, especially for novices, who may not be adequately equipped with essential technological tools, skills, and knowledge. Furthermore, Internet access, training, and skills necessary for quality online teaching/learning are also a test for socially disadvantaged learners. Limited access to technology and the internet can impact their ability to engage in an online environment (Zhong, 2020).

This article explores the first wave of responses of five Algerian universities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. It sheds light on the issues, perspectives, and teaching practices of overnight change of instructors towards online education without online pedagogy and the challenge of learners lacking the intercultural communication skills necessary to participate. As a leading research question, we have based on how universities and learners move from face-to-face learning to the online environment.

Literature Review

The COVID-19 global pandemic has affected Algeria, among other nations. The recorded death tolls are among the highest, forcing the Government to impose since March, 23 2019 a total lockdown in Blida province, a major hotspot, and a 12-hour night curfew to Algiers (Hamadi, 2020), resulting in significant uncertainty as to when schools, educational institutions, and university campuses will reopen.

To mitigate the impact of the lockdown and social distancing, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research has urged institutions around the country to restore teaching and learning through technology, moving from face-to-face mode to the online environment. The latter is the only alternative to this challenge, as it offers the flexibility of learning; its sudden shift in the pedagogical medium undoubtedly forces academics and teachers to rethink how to deliver their course content. (Sarnou & Sarnou, 2021)

Teaching is mainly done by conventional, traditional, or slightly sophisticated teacher-centred methods rather than modern student-oriented applications and techniques at our universities. At the same time, knowledge and information are transmitted through lectures and discussions that require the physical presence of both student and the teacher.

Face-to-Face Education

Classroom-based learning, traditional/ conventional classroom or in-person classroom, has been the standard for centuries, where teaching and learning occur in the same place and at the same time. This learning is essentially a teacher-centred method with the teacher being the provider of knowledge, and passive learning with little input from the students (Harden & Cosby, 2000, pp.338-339) who are passive receivers of knowledge through learning resources that are
often limited to teaching materials, textbooks, relevant exercise books, test and exam papers, etc. Ultimately, the teacher causes learning to occur (Novak, 1998, p.132).

More importantly, face-to-face instruction is essential for building a sense of community (Conole et al., 2008, p.10), it is quite dynamic, and it allows live interaction between the teacher who plays the role of the motivator (Upton, 2006, p.29) and his/her learner and between the fellow learners themselves. It also guarantees a better comprehension and memorization of lesson content and allows classmates more engagement and collaboration (Face-to-face-learning, 2020).

**Online Education**

Online education is self-paced learning, and learners can choose where, when, and how they can learn. They have access to a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or a Learning Management System (LMS), collaborative and interactive learning platforms such as Moodle, Collaborate, or Blackboard. Those learning platforms are based on cloud technology that allows instructors and learners to share educational materials and communicate via the web through forums, chats, blogs, digital resources, and tools to create engaging learning content with the aims of "extending discussions" (Moodle, 2014) and keeping "students informed, involved, and collaborating" (BlackBoard, 2014).

The instruction may be asynchronous when teaching and learning do not happen at the same time (Moore & Kearsley, 2012) or synchronous when teaching and learning happen at the same time; or both of them to facilitate interaction, collaboration in group activities to boost learners’ engagement and avoid high dropout rates. Another aspect of remote learning is that it helps develop 21st-century soft skills by stimulating the students' curiosity, collaborative work, autonomous learning, critical thinking, and digital literacy (Sun & Chen, 2016).

**Intercultural Communication Skills**

There is no single definition of intercultural communication (IC) that all researchers accept. However, Sadokhin (2007) defines IC as a blending of knowledge, skills, and abilities with which an individual can successfully communicate with partners from others. The possession of those qualities such as respect, openness, curiosity, observing, listening, analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting are the key abilities that contribute to intercultural communication, and influence individuals’ communication behaviors virtually and in real life.

Undoubtedly, university education is about teaching content, and the ability to adapt to changing conditions and constantly expand one’s knowledge is increasingly being focused on, in addition to critical thinking, creativity, intercultural communication, and teamwork abilities (European Commission, 2020).

**Research Methodology**

The researchers used the documentary research or documentary sources method to develop their leading research question and analyse existing research documents and other e-sources of information to collect relevant data for this study. The researchers believed that this method is more effective than in-depth interviews or participant observation.

The use of documentary research methods refers to analysing documents containing information about the phenomenon we wish to study (Bailey 1994). This method was undertaken to access data from various sources such like review of available information from books, physical elements, statistics, university and government databases, and online platforms.

**Data Analysis**
This paper adopts a documentary analysis method that provides access to ministry reports, web searches, and online platforms with careful consideration to the quality of the information source, mainly in the context of COVID-19 and the scarcity of physical data.

Furthermore, in order to use reliable sources, importance was granted to the use of university and government sources to support decision-making about a potential rethink of e-learning curricula in the post-crisis era. The researchers used 43 sources, including news articles, Higher Education Ministry, Universities MOODLE Platforms, University Websites/ blogs, PDF books, reports and papers, YouTube Channels, and details of collected data used in this paper is provided in Table 1.

Most of the gathered information (65.11%) came from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research portal, universities' e-learning platforms and websites. When complete information was not accessible, a review of available data, statistics, and other data from government, regional, and multilingual newspapers' articles were substituted.

Table 1. Illustrates the full details of the collected data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources Types</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News articles</td>
<td>Elmoudjahid.com</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Ministry</td>
<td>MESRS press release</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities MOODLE Platforms</td>
<td>elearning.univ-km.dz</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Websites/ blogs</td>
<td>Université Kasdi Merbah Ouargla</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pdf Books, Reports &amp;Papers</td>
<td>Conole et al</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Tube Channels</td>
<td>Maamar, K</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five universities from the four cardinal points in Algeria have been reviewed to represent higher education response to the pandemic. The focus was to explore a university of the capital city of each region, with a stronger focus on universities that have adopted different digital strategies from others. We also attempted to balance regions/ provinces with high cases and those whose cases are just emerging. We present these cases in Table 2.

Table 2. Provinces reviewed from National Office of Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of inhabitants (NOS/2008)</th>
<th>Covid-19 cases (14-04-2020)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>2,947,461</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khemis-Miliana (Ain Defla)</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>771,890</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantine</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>943,111</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oran</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>1,443,052</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouargla</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>552,539</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The province organizes the findings presented in this article in alphabetical order.

Algiers: Houari Boumedienne of Science and Technology University (HBUST):

As a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, the requirement for social distancing, and the suspension of in-person lessons, Houari Boumediene University of Science and Technology has announced on March 31 the “effective” resumption of courses on April 5 (Ismain, 2020).
HBUST University has succeeded in launching the CISCO WebEx meeting platform that allows up to 5,000 students to virtually meet and collaborate online with their teachers in person, thanks to its partner CISCO Algeria. Lessons and videos can be viewed live online or recorded on streaming via the university Moodle digital platform. Access to both CISCO WebEx and Moodle platforms can be done through P.C. or mobile Smartphones, and the novelty is that it can even be made via landlines by dialling a free number. More importantly, instructional videos have been made available on YouTube, besides PDF guides for both teachers and students to initiate and support them, using WebEx and Moodle digital platforms (Ismain & Ahras, 2020).

In addition, training sessions have been scheduled to train teachers to learn to use the various online learning platforms; even some students have also been initiated to distance learning. As a result, teachers are now progressing to the newly introduced alternative forms of learning and started uploading their lessons in PDF and PowerPoint Files in Moodle (Ahras, 2020).

Nevertheless, the only remaining issue that students may need is a good Internet connection. In doing so, HBUST responsible is doing its best to reach an agreement with telephone operators to guarantee a free connection to disseminate the courses. Two operators agreed, and they are still waiting for the third operator’s response (Ahras, 2020).

In case of shutdown continues, online tests and exams could be thought about as the digital platforms offer several functionalities that could be exploited (Ahras, 2020).

**Khemis-Miliana (Ain Defla):** Djilali Bounaama Khemis-Miliana University (DBKMU)

Khemis-Miliana, in Ain Defla, is a neighboring province of Blida about 72 km, has recorded its first COVID-19 case on March 24. Yet, the number has raised fourfold in less than two weeks (“Les Cas de Coronavirus Confirmons”, 2020 & Amrouni, 2020)

So, as a measure to fight the spread of the disease, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research announced on April 4th to postpone the start of the second semester after the spring break (MESRS, 2020a).

The temporary closure coupled with the Ministry instruction to move to online learning have urged academics to take steps to transition to online delivery to stay in contact with their students (Daoud, 2020) even though not being prepared for the transition as no institution or faculty has offered online delivery prior to COVID-19 (S.E., 2020).

To face the emergency, teachers recruited between 2016 and 2019 and who had benefited from formal training in ICT and distance learning were requested together with the university technical staff to train those who may not possess the necessary digital skills to use the Moodle platform in order to create their online courses (MESRS, 2020b).

The University technical staff has created on March 30 a YouTube Channel where instructional videos have been uploaded to equip both teachers and students who may face problems as course designers or online learners with the digital skills necessary to use the University online Moodle platform. Examples demonstrate how to log in to the University e-
learning platform or the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS) web portal (Maamar, n.d.).

Teachers are, as well, shown step-by-step on how to create a course on Moodle, download and install the publishing chain Opale3.7 and Scenari software to produce academic training documents, and how to use LaTeX and Free Office software for technical type settings; besides, creating videos for Opale on Moodle with Camtasia studio to make educational videos; and so, encouraging teachers to use a mixed mode of teaching online (Maamar, n.d.).

However, not all university teachers and students have an account or an updated account on the University platform; so to solve the problem, teachers were asked to get in touch with the Head of departments’ of their faculties and students with their teachers via their professional emails or login the Moodle platform as anonymous users or guests to allow non-logged-in students access their courses (Maamar, n.d.). More importantly, free of charge access was granted to MOODLE platform to unable students connected to fixed or mobile networks to open the platform course content (Rédaction AE, 2020b).

To carry out teaching from face-to-face to online, one of the authors, a teacher at Djilali Bounaama University, who has benefited from formal trainings with Erasmus on how to design a practical online course, feels adequately trained in online pedagogy and the technologies. She interacts with her students, supports them with constant feedback, and helps them collaborate and work together; she even feels ready to test them online (Araibi, 2020).

Some instructors are conducting their lessons by uploading lessons in PDF formats, Word, and PowerPoint Files in the University e-learning platform to support their students in this period of physical, social isolation (Université Djilali Bounaama, 2020); others are doing live online lecture videos for those who could attend and recording them using a webcam for those facing health, isolation or poor internet access during this crisis (Université Djilali Bounaama, 2020).

Additional free web-conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet are being used for synchronous meetings, in addition to other tools like Facebook and email to benefit those facing Internet connection issues (Université Djilali Bounaama, 2020).

Finally, the evolving situation of COVID-19 has led to suspending all laboratories, workshops, practicums, and internships (Schahrazed, 2020).

Oran: Oran 1 Ahmed Ben Bella University (O1ABBU)

Being the second most important city after Algiers, the capital city, Oran is the third most hit province after Blida and Algiers (“Coronavirus : 185 Nouveaux Cas”, 2020).

When the extension of the lockdown after April 5 seemed imminent, the Vice-Rector of external relation, cooperation, and scientific events of Ahmed Ben Bella University, Prof. Smain Belaska, addressed teachers and researchers in a letter that was published on the university e-learning platform encouraging remote learning instead of face-to-face teaching for April in order
to provide access to digital content to their students and keep ties with them during the period of covid-19 lockdown (Université Oran1, 2020b).

To do so, Oran 1 University has provided an e-learning platform to allow instructors to post their lessons with either free or limited access to their students. It has also provided a guide for teachers explaining the steps to post their courses. Students were also given the necessary information to access the uploaded courses via the University e-learning platform. Further, a PDF manual of the University Zimbra collaborative software and webmail was uploaded; besides, two other step-by-step guides on setting up a professional account for teachers and a student account. To do it, the student could fill in an online form, and within 12 hours, s/he could log on to the online learning platform (Université Oran1, 2020a).

Moreover, in order to lighten the e-learning platform in these times of Internet overuse and low-speed access, teachers of first-year students in the different specialties were asked to enable access to their courses to allow the University technical staff to put them on the faculties and institutes’ web pages to reach those who may have Internet connection problems (Université Oran1, 2020a). The uploaded files could either be in videos, PPT, word texts, or scanned manuscripts converted to PDF formats. An application has also been made available for download on the teachers’ smartphones, accessible from Moodle App link (Université Oran1, 2020a).

On April 19, 82% of the educational content was uploaded to the e-learning platform, 900 accounts were created for teachers, 5,400 others for students, and nearly 2,612 have also signed up for the smartphones’ MoodleApp (“Mise en Ligne d’un Portail,” 2020).

Also, to support distance learning and ensure equity in access to the learning resources, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is making additional efforts by putting an online portal (MESRS, 2020b) that gathers the links to all Algerian universities and also by patterning with telephone operators which have guaranteed that browsing the universities web portals and digital platforms will be free of charge to ensure wide dissemination of data (“Mise en Ligne d’un Portail,” 2020).

Constantine: Abdelhamid Mehri-Constantine 2 University (AMC2U)

As a big city in Algeria, Constantine is the third most important city in the East of Algeria, and the fifth-most hit province where the number recorded has almost raised three times (“Les Cas de Coronavirus Confirmés,” 2020 & Amrouni, 2020) urging Higher Education decision-makers to move in-person classes to online delivery in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (MESRS, 2020a).

It was the pioneer in online education since it offers e-learning training for newly recruited teachers since 2016 (ENSC, 2016 & Université Constantine2, 2020a). Constantine 2 University switching digitally is going smoothly as it is not a new strategy; a week after the spring holidays had been extended, the percentage of courses converted to the e-learning platform according to the Vice-Rector, Taki-Eddine Dib Ahmed, in an interview with Cirta FM on 12 April, has reached 75% of the total of 647 modules (Université Constantine2, 2020c).
In fact, a helpdesk was launched on March 26 where PDF guides in Arabic and French were uploaded to help teachers post their courses on the platform, and in case of a request for additional support, four members are reachable via an email (Université Constantine2, 2020b). Other step-by-step guides in PDF format and videos in Arabic and French are also available on the University e-learning platform for teachers (Université Constantine2, 2018).

Moreover, to allow instructors to directly interact with their students in real-time, the University made available tutorials on how to stream live on YouTube with OBS studio Open Broadcaster Software that is a free open source software used for capturing and recording the screen while also capturing audio (Université Constantine2, 2018).

Abdelhamid Mehri Constantine 2 students could access their courses through the university e-learning platform, website, and Facebook. In addition, an email address, phone, and fax were put at the students’ disposal to answer their queries (Université Constantine2, 2020d). There are two ways to log in to the Moodle platform, students can either do it autonomously or by using login-IDs created for students upon their registration by their students’ card ID number as their username and their birth date as password (Université Constantine2, 2020d).

Ouargla: Kasdi Merbah University (KMU)

Ouargla, the northeast province of the Algerian desert, is where the first confirmed coronavirus case was reported on 25 February. It is also the first region where death among children, a girl of 9 years old, was reported (Rédaction AE, 2020a).

As a result of this world pandemic and the increasing number of infected cases and deaths, Ouargla University, as the rest of Algerian universities, has also moved its teaching online as a safety measure to curb the spread of the highly contagious disease.

Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University online learning preparations have started in early March, a few days after receiving Prof. Chitour, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, instruction of February29 sent to the heads of higher education establishments and presidents of scientific research councils that suggested teachers and students adhere and adopt the online approach to ensure the continuity of courses in case of possible pandemic (MESRS, 2020a).

On March 2, 2020, Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University announced that a training course about the Moodle platform was provided for teachers of the ten faculties and two institutes on 4 and March 5. On the 11th of the same month, another training course was scheduled for the faculties and institutes’ heads of departments and their deputies (Université Ouargla, 2020a & 2020b).

As the pandemic continued to gain ground, the spring holiday was extended for two weeks, and it was announced that in-person teaching was suspended for higher education, and online learning would be adopted. Academics have to post their courses onto the universities’ platforms which are expected to continue until the extension of the lockdown at least 29 April (Bensouiah, 2020).
Also, as the implementation of online teaching at higher education is new, Kasdi Merhab Ouargla University's information and technology team has developed a practical manual in PDF format to ensure teachers are equipped to post their lessons on the university MOODLE platform. An email address is also available on the e-learning platform home page at their disposal for additional assistance (Université Ouargla, 2020a).

On March 19, 2020, in a letter to the different faculties' deans and institutes' directors, Vice-rector Abdelfateh Abi Daoud insisted that teachers must register and open an account via their professional Zimbra platform to post their lessons on the University Moodle platform. In contrast, students can self-enroll on Moodle platform using any email account.(Université Ouargla, 2020a).

Additionally, many video tutorials have been made available on YouTube hosted by Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University experts to benefit teachers and students by seeing and hearing to access knowledge and skills needed to use the Moodle platform for effective teaching and learning (NTCSA Laboratoire, 2020). Audio-visual videos provide step-by-step support for users to enroll in Moodle, build/open a new course, quiz, create participants' sections and groups, and convert a PowerPoint to a video (NTCSA Laboratoire, 2020).

Results and Discussion

The synthesis of the five Algerian universities' responses to the challenge imposed by the COVID-19 situation shows that the digital strategies taken in higher education vary from a university to another. Nevertheless, there are more similarities than differences.

The meta-analysis from the above information highlights organizational, pedagogical, and technological challenges.

1- While nearly all the provinces of the big cities with developed economies are reporting a high number of cases, Ouargla, despite being the wealthiest province in Algeria, has recorded a lower number of confirmed cases compared to Khemis-Miliana (in Ain Defla province), which is a small town with a developing economy, but has a far high number of COVID-19 cases.

2- Except for Ouargla in the South, the analysis also shows that, in general, the Northern provinces and mainly those closer to Blida (the epicentre of Covid-19) have a more significant number of COVID-19 cases.

3- All universities have suspended face-to-face teaching and extended their spring holiday even though Ouargla has a few infected cases; there is a national consensus on closing campuses and moving to distance instruction to support students continue their studies and save the academic year.

4- Almost all universities are facing the challenge of the sudden shift to online delivery that needs special pedagogical, digital and intercultural skills, besides possessing a P.C. or Smartphone and good Internet.

5- Almost all academics and students struggle with the low-speed Internet in these times of over-use.

6- All universities use free digital platforms such as Moodle, Zimbra, Opale 3.7 and Scenari, LaTeX and Free Office, Camtasia studio, OBS (Open Broadcasting Software), Zoom (free version), Google Meet, Facebook, and universities' websites.
7- Houari Boumedienne of Science and Technology University is the only university that has integrated Webex meeting platform into its Moodle Learning Management System (LMS), offering, thereby, real-time lectures.
8- It is also noticeable that no university had remote education prior to COVID-19, and all were not ready for this unprecedented emergency despite possessing the digital platform Moodle.
9- Even though ICT and distance learning training for newly recruited teachers have started since 2016, remote teaching is still not promoted.
10- Except Ouargla, which had in-person training courses about the Moodle platform for teachers and staff after receiving Prof. Chitour's Chitour's letter, all the other universities did it in PDF formats and YouTube tutorials after the pandemic had been declared and campuses closed.
11- Interestingly, all universities' technical teams have helped in online delivery by developing practical manuals in PDF format besides YouTube instructional videos to ensure teachers and students are equipped to navigate the universities' digital platforms and use the technological tools.
12- Surprisingly, no institution has offered online and face-to-face training for instructors to learn how to effectively design an online course, motivate and engage their students, and test them online.
13- Many academics and students do not have a university email account, making the Moodle login, intercultural interaction, and collaboration more difficult for all, whether teachers, students, or university technical staff.
14- Each university uses a different login way to its online services. Ahmed Ben Bella University in Oran login process allows students to fill in an online form, and within 12 hours, logging on to the online learning platform can be possible. Nevertheless, the login method at Kasdi Merhab University in Ouargla via login-IDs created for students upon their registration is more straightforward and accessible for the users and would solve the universities' forgotten password resetting issues.
15- It is noticeable that the rapid move to online delivery is a real challenge for both academics and students who are used to conventional instruction to teach/ learn online; resulting in a temporary decline in teaching/ learning quality and equity regardless of teachers and technical staff's efforts made in a relatively short time in a context of emergency.
16- It is important to note that there are no shared sources among the five Algerian universities. Apparently, teachers and technical staff endeavored to support only the learners’ online instruction. They did nothing to help them develop their intercultural communication skills to function effectively and appropriately in the online setting, except, a teacher at Djilali Bounaama Khemis-Miliana University who benefited from trainings with Erasmus and possesses the crucial skills needed to be an effective online teacher and the required strategies for developing engagement and rapport with students.
17- Despite the digital move, university decision-makers have to make additional efforts to empower learners to develop their intercultural communication skills in education to foster a culture of positivity, which will benefit all parties for sustainable development.

Conclusion

This paper highlights the responses of five Algerian universities to the COVID-19 pandemic and sheds light on the issues, perspectives, and pedagogical practices of the instructors' overnight change to switching pre-existing face-to-face learning to the online environment.
Overall data shows that no university was prepared for the digital move, and thus a lot had to be done. However, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research pre-pandemic instruction urging academics to adhere to e-learning strategy in case of potential pandemic helped a minority pave the way to online shift.

Yet, shifting from a conventional face-to-face to an entirely virtual delivery strategy will not happen overnight and is tied with many constraints and challenges such as access to ICT or home office infrastructure and sufficient internet bandwidth for both academics and students, mainly for those living in remote locations and lacking digital skills needed to take part in the online environment.

Additional support and training need to be given to teachers who have rapidly migrated whole study programs online, more support at registering, security, designing their materials, assessing, and keeping records of their students’ learning outcomes to acquire the required competencies. Also, to enable learners to have life-long changing experiences, develop their intercultural communication skills, and enhance access and use equity, equality, and the quality of virtual HE, a rethink of e-learning curricula is called for in the post-crisis era. Further, universities must make efforts to address the digital divide by particularly enabling underprivileged students to access technical devices, such as personal computers and modern learning mobile gadgetry, through financial aid (discounts and/or funding).

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References


Investigating the Effects of Critical Reading Skills on Students’ Reading Comprehension

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Abstract
Critical reading is an indispensable learning skill that students need both inside and outside the classroom. Even though many attempts have been made to unravel the impact of critical reading on Second Language (L2) reading, there is a paucity of investigations examining the effect of critical reading combined with students’ active role. The study raises three questions. They are: 1) What are the students’ views about reading comprehension and critical reading skills? And 2) What difficulties do students encounter when they read? And 3) how can critical reading strategies improve students’ reading comprehension? Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate how critical reading skills can enhance students reading’ comprehension while working in groups. For the sake of this study, data were gathered from an open-ended questionnaire distributed to university students before intervention, learning logs, and participant observations. The results of the study revealed significant effects of critical reading skills on students’ reading comprehension at different levels. Students viewed reading as an active dynamic process that motivated the activation of higher order thinking skills and helped students tap into their prior experiences to approach the reading materials. It also showed how implementing a rich repertoire of critical reading skills enabled students to overcome reading problems as they could read not just what is directly stated but what is being communicated between and beyond the lines. The findings offered several pedagogical implications and recommendations for further research.

Keywords: critical thinking, reading skills, group work, critical reading skills, reading comprehension

Introduction

Critical thinking and reading are key skills that EFL students need the most to expedite and promote the learning process. This is primarily because reading plays a pivotal role in developing English in general and is the principal activity through which students learn in English in their academic courses. The strong relationship between the ability to read critically, academic success, and the need for critical thinking in the workplace or daily lives have been observed by researchers (Edman, 2008; Ennis, 2018; Hervás & Miralles, 2006; Huijie, 2010; Wade, 2008). Unlike poor readers, students who are good readers often pass their exams with high marks because they implement a rich repertoire of strategies to approach reading texts and overcome textual difficulties (Kim, 2020). Deploying these strategies properly turns students into critical readers who apply higher-order thinking skills. Meanwhile, in some contexts, being critical might be ambiguous. In the language learning context, the word “critical” does not imply negative meanings, i.e., looking for mistakes and flaws; Milan (1995) stated that being critical entails “using careful evaluation, sound judgment, and reasoning powers” (p. 218).

However, the issue of power relations inside the classroom must be considered because students’ active role is endangered by their teachers’ role (Harmer, 2015; Richards & Rodger, 2014; Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018). Students should be more independent and develop a critical stance about the knowledge they receive and produce when they read. The authoritative role played by teachers in foreign-language pedagogy might deprive students of the potential to have more freedom, engagement, and empowerment over their learning due to some cultural, social, or political reasons.

In Saudi Arabia, there are standards in any educational programme that should be met to raise the quality of Saudi university education. The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation (NCAAE) (2008) clearly stated and defined these standards which include the teaching and learning process. Teachers must vary their teaching strategies with a focus on those that invite higher order thinking skills and encourage students to be active, making learning student-centered. In teaching reading in a Saudi context, Khojah and Thomas (2021) assert that using different strategies has a positive effect on students’ reading motivation. Nevertheless, not all English teachers abide by these standards and still implement traditional teaching methods where there is no room for students to have more capacity and become active participants (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Hence, teachers need to cede some of their control to students to enable them to hone critical reading skills in a systematic framework (Paul & Elder, 2005). Critical reading requires students to think more actively and deeply to understand a text and analyze it, i.e., to read between the lines and beyond the lines rather than focusing on just reading the lines. Group work is an effective strategy that gives students active roles to play when they read and, therefore, cultivates their critical reading skills. Beside improving reading comprehension, students who work in groups develop certain collaborative skills such as being more sensitive and able to make more effective decisions due to high-level participation and interaction (Gonzales & Torres, 2016).

The study will be useful for student to improve their reading comprehension by combining critical reading with their active role. Upon completion of this study, it is hoped that teachers incorporate critical reading skills into the curriculum and teach them explicitly to
students. Also it is hoped that researchers conduct further research to explore the impact of introducing critical reading skills with different sexes, ages, and fields of study at different stages in a Saudi context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how critical reading skills can enhance students reading comprehension while working in groups. Three research methods were used to collect data. An open-ended questionnaire was distributed to students to determine their views about their role in the classroom, students’ learning logs as a way to help students to stimulate their reflections and to increase their cognitive control over their learning and participant, and observations carried out by the researcher to gain insight into what was taking place while students were working on assigned tasks. The study raises three questions. They are: 1) What are the students’ views about reading comprehension and critical reading skills? And 2) What difficulties do students encounter when they read? And 3) How can critical reading strategies improve students’ reading comprehension?

**Literature Review**

**Critical Thinking**

Improving the critical thinking ability of students has become more than just a fad, it has become central to their learning. Edman (2008) pinpointed that although faculty members see the need for teaching critical thinking to their students in different institutions and see it as an important educational goal, they do not state exactly what they mean by “critical thinking.” Students must be able to think critically inside the classroom for academic purposes and outside the classroom as well. Students are exposed to a vast volume of authentic materials, most noticeably, while surfing the net. Students also need critical thinking to deal with the challenges they encounter in their workplace after graduation or in their daily lives. Another benefit of introducing critical thinking is that it can enable students to deal with the technological world and keep up with emerging trends in technology (Edman, 2008; Ennis, 2018; Hervás & Miralles, 2006; Huijie, 2010; Wade, 2008).

Several definitions have been provided by various authors to define critical thinking. For example, Facione (2011) defined critical thinking as “purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, evaluation, and inference as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which judgment is based” (p. 826). A similar definition is suggested by Astleitner (2002), who viewed critical thinking as a higher-order thinking skill which includes evaluating arguments, and is a purposeful, self-regulatory judgment that ends in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference. It is clear from the two definitions that critical thinking requires many things to be achieved. This is shown by Halonen & Gray (2000), who maintain that critical thinking is not one activity; rather, the term refers to a collection of thinking skills that advance intellectual focus, motivation, and engagement with new ideas. These thinking skills include the ability to recognize patterns; to solve problems in practical, creative, or scientific ways; to engage in psychological reasoning; and to adopt different perspectives when evaluating ideas or issues. Teaching students to think critically inside or outside the classroom improves their abilities to observe, infer, question, decide, develop new ideas, and analyze arguments. However, students have to be involved in different activities to hone their critical thinking skills. Astington and Olson (1995) asserted that it is hard to tell how students process thinking in their minds because thinking has no behavioral standards, but rather you can deduce how students process thinking by observing their actions as they are involved in different tasks. In the case of reading, reading
is challenging to students because teachers ask students to read academic and scientific materials most of the time without telling them what they are supposed to read and knowing how students have read the assigned materials (Manarine, 2022). Alfllerbach (2022), in his description of critical reading adds “knowing that one is allowed -and expected- to read critically is as important as how to read critically” (p. 158).

Many of the skills associated with critical thinking are inherent and practiced in the processes of critical reading which falls into the category of higher order thinking processes.

**Critical Reading and Critical Reading Proficiency in ELT**

In English as a Foreign Language Setting (EFL), there is little interest in critical discourse analysis and critical reading in specific. Three issues might be the reasons for not having much research: feasibility, ethicality, and necessity. How can L2 learners analyze and critique a foreign language without having the core features of that target language? How can teachers and students balance their discussion of different topics raised by authors? And what is the actual need for critical language and critical reading for L2 learners? For beginners, reading is viewed as a bottom-up process which conceptualizes reading as a decoding process of the text with a focus on litters and words recognitions. For advanced learners, reading is viewed as a top-down process that conceptualizes how a whole text is accessed and understood (Wallace, 2003). However, many definitions have been given for critical reading by researchers. According to Huijie (2010), in the past, the definition of critical reading had to do with the readers’ ability to discuss and question the written materials for analysis and evaluation. Later, the definition of critical reading turned to focus on viewing reading as an active and interactive process that requires a dialogue between the reader, text, and author at different levels using different higher order thinking skills. Considering reading as an active process requires readers to take active positions by being involved in the reading process. Readers should develop a distance between the writer’s arguments and the written materials after making a rigorous analysis to reach sound conclusions (Pennycook, 2000; Priozzi, 2003). One thorough and clear definition is given by Priozzi (2003):

> Critical reading can be defined as a very high-level comprehension of written materials requiring interpretation and evaluation skills that enable readers to separate important from unimportant information, distinguishing between fact and opinions, and determine the writer’s purpose and tone. (p. 325)

For Wallace and Wray (2011), critical reading is about being skeptical to examine how the author can justify his or her argument or if the reader knows more about a given topic. The above definition clarifies that critical reading is different from literal reading which focuses only on surface meaning to find out the main ideas and supporting details. Critical reading is more complex and requires the readers to read the lines, between lines, and beyond lines, employing different skills several times to approach the texts (Huijie, 2010). However, many researchers give diverse descriptions on approaching critical reading proficiency and assure that there is a necessity for systematic explicit teaching aimed at improving students’ critical reading abilities.

For example, Wallace and Wray (2011) recommended five questions to gauge students’ critical reading. These five critical synopsis questions are as follows:
1. Why am I reading this?
2. What are the authors trying to do in writing this?
3. What are the authors saying that is relevant to what I want to find out?
4. How convincing is what the authors are saying?
5. In conclusion, what use can I make of this?

DiYanni (2017), give descriptions to approach critical reading proficiency by offering checklists containing descriptions of how to teach critical reading. DiYanni added that by teaching students how to know what the text says and how it transmits these pieces of information, students move to achieve the larger goals of critical reading, i.e., to assess the author’s purpose, to identify the tone, evaluate the evidence, and the assumptions underlying the author’s position and grasp the point of view of the author. Similarly, Carrigus (2002) suggested two levels of skills needed for approaching critical reading. The first is basic critical reading skills at the paragraph level focusing on how to get the main ideas, how to identify idea patterns, and how to know transitional signals in sentences and paragraphs. The second is higher-level critical reading skills focusing on making inferences, synthesis, summarizing, and evaluation of the materials. Huijie (2010) provided a hierarchical framework of critical reading proficiency consisting of four levels: structural analysis, rhetoric analysis, social relevance, and holistic evaluation. The first and the second levels are similar to what DiYanni (2017) and Carrigus (2002) have proposed in that they deal with understanding the paragraph and evaluating the text. The third level activates the social relevancy with cultural background knowledge of the reader and writer with the text and the situational context and intertextual context with the text as well. The fourth refers to reading from a critical stance, including weighing the pieces of evidence, examining the sources and the text’s ideology, and distinguishing between materials representing facts and opinions. However, there are some important factors that teachers have to reconsider, i.e., the way they test students’ reading ability. Huijie (2010) asserted that the items of the test that focus on facts and memorizing details do not encourage students to read between and beyond lines and do not call for higher order thinking ability.

Another important factor that enables students to foster critical thinking is the way teachers perceive and demonstrate critical thinking while they teach, within a systematic framework of teaching (Paul & Elder, 2005).

**The Role of Teacher-Learner inside the Classroom in ELT**

In English Language Teaching (ELT), the role played by students is determined by the different roles the teachers take inside the classroom. These roles are essential in creating the desirable conditions that facilitate learning and guide what the teachers want to achieve (Harmer, 2015). If teachers decide to empower students to take a more active role in classrooms, reflectively linking their knowledge and positions with the newly learned materials, then they have to abandon spoon-feeding education and give more freedom to their students to be active learners. In the ELT context, however, language teaching and learning practices used in the past might not be as effective as teachers hope for many reasons: the status of English as a global language, the early time at which young children learn English, getting a better job and technological innovations, and viewing English as the main means of instruction in the university level.
Among the approaches and methods in language teaching is the communicative approach, which was a reaction to the dominant language teaching approaches in the 1960s and before. It is based on the premise that the main goal of language teaching is meaningful communication for the real world. This approach to teaching carries several advantages to learning. One of its implications is that it shifts the focus of instruction from the student to the teacher to put students at the center of the learning process. Accordingly, teachers and students should play different roles from those found in traditional classrooms settings, where teachers are the only givers of knowledge. Students learn best when they are given more capacity to work collaboratively and be active participants, not only passive respondents (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). When students interact with one another and with teachers during communicative tasks, they become more willing to take risks and not afraid of making mistakes, able to express themselves while using the target language (Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018).

According to Jacobs and Farrell (2003), to best reach a communicative view in our classrooms, a paradigm shift is needed in our thinking about teachers, learning, and teaching. For example, when the focus of teaching-learning moves from teachers to students, this requires greater attention to be given to the processes of learning rather than the product of learning, and students best learn when they engage in meaningful situations socially and practice critical thinking skills. One way teachers can expand the abilities of students to practice critical skills in language teaching and learning is to be engaged in open dialogue with their students (Abdin, 2021).

Breen and Candlin (1980) added that when students play the role of negotiators at different levels in working together and with the teacher, they become more independent learners. On the other hand, teachers’ roles are seen as facilitators and organizers who manage the communication process among students and the learned materials and provide help if needed. Similarly, Weimer (2002) emphasized that when students are involved in various activities and work together, they learn at their own pace and ask critical questions to each other, and they are more likely to learn best. She adds that in student-centered classrooms, learning is not just about gathering grades but rather about promoting learning because students find many opportunities to practice what they have learnt and expect what will be on exams.

**Studies on Critical Thinking Skills and Critical Reading**

A growing body of literature has investigated the positive impact of integrating critical thinking skills in the English as a foreign language context (EFL) to improve reading comprehension. In this context, Wilson (2016) carried out a study to investigate how critical reading was implemented by three English teachers in three English-for-academic-purposes teaching-learning contexts. His study revealed that teaching critical thinking skills and critical reading enabled students to be good readers and hone more cognitive and metacognitive skills to approach the texts. However, Wilson noted that although teachers deployed different methods to teach critical reading, there was a need to combine these skills with a balanced framework of critical thinking dispositions such as character, attitude, self-efficacy, and being open-minded.

Similarly, Bağ and Gürsoy (2021) conducted a study to incorporate critical thinking into the curriculum of EFL learners and to explicitly teach them critical thinking skills. The results indicated that the integration of critical thinking both improved students’ critical thinking skills as well as language proficiency. Another finding was that the practice of critical thinking made
learning motivating to students because of the authenticity of materials and supporting learning environment. Also Moeniasl; Taylor; deBraga; Manchanda; Huggon & Graham (2022) examined the critical thinking skills of EFL undergraduate students studying a psychology course. The findings of this study showed that students performed lower in critical thinking skills tests due to their low English proficiency level. For this reason, students needed to develop a critical approach to reading and teachers had to teach a curriculum which cultivate critical thinking skills. Salameh; Salameh; & Al-Emami (2019), in another study, investigated how cognitive and metacognitive strategies improve students’ comprehension in the three sub-skills of reading, i.e., understanding, critical thinking, and quality schema. The study revealed that cognitive and metacognitive strategies improved students reading abilities and cultivated their critical thinking skills by relating their previous knowledge with existing information. In addition, students were able to answer questions they had predicted after reading the target text. Gao (2019), with EFL university students, conducted a study to examine how an analytical reading mode affects students’ thinking skills. The study concluded that an analytical reading mode had a positive impact on students thinking skills. Students were able to move from the first level of relevance, clarity, and logic to the higher and more challenging level of profundity and flexibility more easily. The study emphasized the need for analytical reading strategy training because mastering a skill requires a procedure followed by practice. In another study, Wong (2016) investigated the effectiveness of incorporating critical thinking skills with reading strategies to improve the academic reading comprehension of Saudi learners. The researcher found out that after reviewing documents, Saudi students found it difficult to cope with degree programmes in the US due to the educational background they came from, in which critical thinking abilities were not sufficiently honed. For this reason, he designed a critical thinking resource guide to help teachers address students’ reading difficulties with different reading activities practiced inside the classroom and via online texts to be practiced outside the classroom. These activities required students to be involved in a variety of critical reactions toward the texts being communicated, including analyzing, interpreting, and sometimes evaluating. Ozensoy (2021), investigated the impact of introducing critical reading skills on students' academic success in social studies courses. He found that there was a significant difference in students’ academic progress who practiced critical reading skills compared with another group who did not. Another finding was that in teaching critical skills, there were other factors to be considered such as the school, the classroom environment, and how activities were integrated within the curriculum. In a recent study, Karakoc, Ruegg & Gu (2022) carried out a study to explore the reading requirements for undergraduate students. The study showed that students had to be exposed to a wide range of reading materials such as academic book chapters and journals. However, for students to meet the demands of university courses, they need to learn more complex reading skills to be able to read more deeply and critically. Finally, Olifiant; Cekiso; & Rautenbach (2020) did a study to understand the critical reading perceptions and actual practices of English learners. The results revealed that learners had high self-perceptions when they reported their reading ability, i.e., implementing a rich repertoire of reading strategies when answering reading comprehension questions. However, their claims to have different strategies did not reflect their actual practice inside the classroom when working on reading passages. Their reading ability could deal with only what was clearly stated in the lines but failed to capture what was stated between lines and beyond lines.
Methods

Participants

The participants of the study were chosen purposively, consisting of 80 Saudi male students from a Saudi university enrolled in a pre-professional programme for health sciences. The study was carried out in the English language department of King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Science, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They study different English courses as a mandatory fulfillment of the demands of mainstream university courses. Before beginning the research, the students’ permission was obtained to take part. In the data analysis, their names were concealed to keep them anonymous.

Research Questions

To fulfill the objectives of the current study, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1. What are students’ views about reading comprehension and critical reading skills?
RQ2. What difficulties do students encounter when they read?
RQ3. How can critical reading skills improve students’ reading comprehension?

Data Collection and Analysis

Three research methods were used to collect data. An open-ended questionnaire was distributed to students to determine their views about their role in the classroom and views about reading comprehension and critical reading skills prior to the intervention. Another source of data was students’ learning logs as a way to help students to stimulate their reflections and to increase their cognitive control over their learning about critical reading skills. Mackey and Gass (2015) note that learners’ diaries can provide insights into learning processes as students gain a better understanding of the way they learn and look for what works best for them. The third was participant observations by the researcher to gain insight into what was taking place while students were working on assigned tasks. The observed data were recorded by taking notes. For data analysis, the findings were triangulated as possible with students’ views discussed earlier in the first and second research questions for in-depth findings. Students’ answers and learning patterns were coded and categorized into themes and related to the research questions.

Research Procedures

This study was based on a hierarchical framework of critical reading proficiency consisting of four levels: structural analysis, rhetoric analysis, social relevance, and holistic evaluation, as suggested by Huijie (2010). As a preparation before the intervention, one reading passage was chosen as an example to practice different reading skills in the three reading stages, i.e., pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading, by modeling, role-play, and teacher thinking aloud. It was also explained how each skill fit into each reading stage by the teacher such as getting the main idea, figuring meanings out of context, making inferences, and so on. After that, short reading passages followed by a set of questions were handed to students, who were given an allotted time to practice the critical reading strategies and show their answers. The researcher circulated and provided help and guidance needed and suggested some tips for the coming activity. For the intervention, students were to work on 14 reading passages and answer the questions that follow in their books. They had to work individually first and record their answers and comments in a learning log and then in groups to share and present their answers in front of the other groups. The learning log schedule was distributed beforehand to students, which
showed how critical reading skills were used to complete different reading activities, in what reading stages they were working, and how reading difficulties were tackled.

**Findings**

Table 1. Students’ views about reading and critical reading skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading is viewed as:</th>
<th>A separate subject</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A separate skill</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A word recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A process</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Critical reading skills are viewed as:                     | A way of thinking   |
|                                                           | A set of questions  |
|                                                           | A different point of views |

Table 1 provides an account of the main findings to the first research question about students’ views concerning reading and critical reading skills, “What are students’ views about reading comprehension and critical reading skills?” many themes emerged from their replies while defining reading comprehension and critical reading skills. Students defined reading comprehension in different ways. They looked at reading as a separate subject, a skill, recognizing the unknown vocabulary and a process. With respect to defining critical thinking skills, students considered critical reading skills a way of thinking or a set of difficult questions.

Table 2. Students reading difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main reading difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with difficult vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No enough exposure to written texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with vocabulary learning and building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No enough training and practice on reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not able to figure out the main idea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 is related to the second research question about reading difficulties, “What difficulties do students encounter when they read?” students reported their main reading difficulties after answering the first research question. These difficulties had to do with recognizing unknown words and identifying the main ideas of reading passages.

Table 3. The effects of critical reading skills on students’ reading comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students have learnt the following:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being able to guess meaning out of context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to make inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to create a dialogue with the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to activate background knowledge</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 answers the third research question, “*How can critical reading skills improve students’ reading comprehension?*” participant observations and students’ learning logs were used to gather information for this stage. By implementing critical reading skills, students improved their reading comprehension to understand new words and make use of the contextual clues. In addition, students were able to be involved in the read materials and resort to their prior knowledge to approach the texts and make inferences.

**Discussion**

Students while providing answers to the first research question, “*What are students’ views about reading comprehension and critical reading skills?*”, provided multiple points of view. First, some considered reading either a separate subject or a skill. For example, students gave replies like “it is a very basic important subject,” “it is a subject that uses more than linguistic aspects,” and “it is a subject that includes new vocabulary and helps you to learn new things.” By giving reading this reductive definition, reading is dealt with as any other studied subjects like physics, mathematics, and geography, not as an active, complex process that requires engagement with the text at different levels (Huijie, 2010).

Other replies viewed reading as a skill such as “it is an essential skill for obtaining knowledge” and “reading is a skill to understand a paragraph or a sentence to get the main idea.” Presenting reading as a skill is more precise than seeing reading as a subject because it means that it can be learned and improved upon as a cognitive and metacognitive ability by having certain knowledge and receiving proper training. Reading skills represent the automatic deployment of linguistic levels such as word recognition and syntactic processing, while strategies represent the conscious control readers have over their reading. Both good skills and strategies are associated with fluent readers (Grabe & Stoller, 2019).

Another common answer focused on word recognition to define reading, using some aspects of the text such as typological features. A student indicated that reading means to read word by word to finish what is written. However, he thinks this is unhelpful. He asserts “… the passage is too long. I cannot concentrate and cannot answer questions that follow.” By doing this, students believed that meaning only could be found in words.

A few defined reading as a process or a way to communicate with the text, but their definition was incomplete or inconsistent because it overlooked the dynamic involvement among the reader, text, and activity (Koda, 2007). One student stated that “it is a method of communication and gaining information that you develop by time,” “it is a process of recognizing words,” and “it is a process to gain knowledge to understand the text.”

Taking into account the above replies, students had different interpretations of critical reading as well, which might be a result of their definitions of reading comprehension. In one reply, a student reported: “critical reading means a more advanced way of thinking. It is to understand the deep meaning of the text.” However, accepting that the read text had both surface and deeper meanings did not stop students’ worry about not being able to tackle critical reading questions. This was clearly shown in the following: “critical reading means a set of questions that are written in a complicated way. In order to answer critical reading questions, your English
proficiency should be high.” “Some questions have more than one correct answer, how will I know which one is the correct.” Or “Some questions are about opinion, not about specific facts, so we have lots of argument.” Also, “Some questions ask me about my point of view. How will I know that my answer is correct especially on the exam?” Part of the problem could be related to the fact that students are not used to expressing themselves and saying what they think about what they have learned. One plausible reason for viewing critical reading this way is that students deal with the reading process as a one-way process, which makes them passive. By doing this, students are prevented from taking active positions when they are engaged in the reading process (Pennycook, 2000; Priozzi, 2003).

Concerning the second research question about reading difficulties, “What difficulties do students encounter when they read?” students earlier had unclear definitions of reading comprehension and critical reading, and it is not surprising that they provided answers like the following to show their struggle with answering critical reading.

A common problem encountered by students when reading has to do with new vocabulary in the text. They faced either difficult vocabulary or words that have multiple meanings or words that were easily forgotten later. In one repose, a student suggested a solution to this problem. He asserted “I asked the teacher to pronounce it for me to relate meaning with the pronunciation.” The student might know its meaning because they listen to it on TV or on the radio but are not sure of its spelling. However, while this might be helpful in the classroom, it is not on the exam when students cannot ask any questions during silent exams or outside the classroom. Also not having proper practice and training is another reading problem. A student pinpointed that “some sentences have multiple meanings. How can I figure out that main idea? I do not know how.” Again, this illustrates the need for introducing critical reading skills to students explicitly (Paul & Elder, 2005).

In attending to the third research question, “How can critical reading skills improve students’ reading comprehension?” the findings of the present study are consistent with those of Salameh et al., (2019), Gao, (2019), Wong, (2016), Ozensoy, (2021), and Olifiant et al., (2020), who found that critical reading skills positively impact students’ reading ability.

The learning logs and the class discussions showed how critical reading skills improved students’ reading comprehension in several ways. First, while working on the first two reading passages, students focused more on linguistic levels for most of the discussions they were involved in after each passage, and much of their talk was about asking questions related to the meanings of unknown words. In the learning logs, the activity they worked on the most was difficult vocabulary, and they provided no information for critical reading skills used in the learning log. They did not try to figure out the meanings from the context nor to use what other words they knew in the lines to catch what they do not know. Students also did not make use of the contextual clues available in the passage. This finding agrees with how they defined reading in the interviews when they emphasized the importance of knowing the meanings of every single word in the text without referring to grammatical or lexical properties essential to explaining the text. By limiting reading to word recognition, students will not be able to achieve the high-level comprehension needed for critical reading (Priozzi, 2003). Later, after practicing critical reading strategies, students reported in the learning log that they could guess a meaning of a difficult
word, for example, “affluent,” by reading the sentence before which talked about rich people and by looking at the title of the passage which was about the life of rich people. Another example was students’ ability to make inferences and differentiate between information. In their attempt to answer a question about whether this piece of information was stated or implied information, they all agreed that this sentence was implied: “Subways are more expensive than buses.” They gave different reasons why they came to this conclusion. For instance, one student suggested that in the text, “Curitiba had traffic problems although they had buses system.” His reply was that “Curitiba is located in a developing country, i.e., Brazil, which means the government there cannot afford to build a subway system.” Another student added that “subways need more maintenance and people to look after.” It is clear from the above talk that students were able to provide different options in order to deal with problems they encountered and developed their interactional skills while working collaboratively (Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018).

Second, students were able to create a dialogue with the text on several occasions when trying to answer different questions. In the interview before the intervention, some students told the researcher that they had difficulty with the unknown vocabulary leading to information gaps because they looked at words in isolation and thought that meaning was located only in the text; they used neither their background knowledge nor experiences to understand the reading material. After practicing critical reading skills, students were involved more in the text by having a dialogue, discussing the information provided, and attending to their own experiences and culture. On one occasion, students were examining the universal association of home with the hearth, and there was information that was acceptable in their culture, like the association of hearth with food. However, some ideas were open for debate. In the following quote, students had difficulty accepting some portions of the passage, so they started to critically evaluate the ideas.

S1: Here it says, “in a cold winter night in Japan, a family gathers around a heater …”
S1: Why do they sit around the fireplace?
S2: Maybe it is so cold there. Here we have a long summer season, and in winter it’s not so cold.
S3: That’s right in the coming sentence: they sit with the blanket over their legs.
S4: Also, in winter we prefer going to the desert and camping.

In the above conversation, all members took part in the conversation and shared their own experiences and looked at the reading material from their own perspectives. They all wondered why in Japan a family would sit around a heater and this led to a discussion to show their different viewpoints. After activating their background knowledge, they were able to make their evaluation by making use of their own culture.

Another example took place while practicing a brainstorming activity; a conversation between the teacher and students showed how students were able to interact with the text by expecting what might be the reading is about. The teacher asked this question and then students provided their answers, reading from their learning log: “How do today’s attitudes about homes and their inhabitants compare with past ideas about human needs?”

S1: In the past, they were looking for what is necessary.
S2: Yes, you mean practice, only things they need.
T: Can you give examples?
S1: They made a fireplace and strong doors to protect themselves.
T: So? We do the same today.
S3: Yes, but in the past, they used what they got without considering decoration.
S1: That is correct; they did not have expensive furniture because they were poor.
S3: Yes, my grandfather told me they used to make tents from camels’ skins.
S4: That is cool. In my village, a long time ago, we built our homes using stones from mountains.

It is clear from the conversation above that students implemented information activated in their minds and resorted to their cultural perspectives to answer the given question. Students jotted down their ideas and built on them by interacting with each other’s responses. Students also were able to generate new ideas when the teacher interacted with them, who asked more questions for elaboration and clarification. Another thing was that although students had the same cultural community, they had different background knowledge depending on the background they came from, like S3, whose grandfather used to live in a desert. Such an activity allowed students to tap into their background knowledge and think more critically, which made their learning more effective because the new information to be studied would be meaningful and, to some extent, familiar to them. When students start to read about the new topic, they are more likely to actively link their prior knowledge they discuss with upcoming new information. It will be easier for them to know more about the target culture, i.e., English, and accept it as they see the differences in their culture, as with what happened in the responses of S3 and S4.

Before the intervention, students reported clearly in the interview that although they could interact with the information linguistically in the text, they still found it difficult to understand some cultural ideas.

Third, students were able to read from a critical stance by offering several answers when they were discussing this question: “In your opinion, why wasn’t sick building syndrome a problem in the past?” In the following conversation, they gave various answers.

S1: I think people in the past did not stay home most of the time.
S2: What do you mean? Why?
S1: Because they were busy looking for food.
S2: I see.
S3: I agree. I think they just came home to sleep.
S4: Ok, and for sick building syndrome, you need to spend a long time [there].
S5: I think in the past they lived primitive lives, without much furniture or chemicals.

Moreover, when students provide different answers to the same questions to justify what they are saying, and in return ask different questions to challenge others about their answers, this enables them to deepen their understanding about the passage and create a safe environment for everyone to express themself. When S2 asked S1 a question for clarification, he was specific, and this led to constructive feedback although it looked like being negative, as S2 did not agree at first. Because S2 did not accept S1’s contribution at face value, he helped other students to get S1’s message across and built on his answer, and all students after that became more aware of the development of this understanding in their minds.
Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how critical reading skills can enhance students reading comprehension while working in groups. The study revealed the following findings. First, students’ responses to the open-ended questions at first made it clear that the majority of them defined reading in a way that places emphasis on the linguistic level. Few of them defined critical reading as an active dynamic process that required the implementation of higher order thinking skills. As a result, they reported many reading obstacles they were used to encountering while approaching reading texts. After introducing critical reading skills, students were able to read in a more effective way by considering reading as a completely dynamic process that requires many skills to be in operation. These skills assisted students in relying on their previous knowledge, validating existing knowledge to create new knowledge. It also enabled students to use contextual clues surrounding the text to guess the meaning of unknown words and to identify the main ideas of the text and make inferences and synthesis of the materials. Second, working in groups while practicing critical reading required the teacher to relinquish his dominant role and gave room for students to be responsible for their learning. It also added additional value to students’ reading comprehension. Students were encouraged to vary between their answers and provide more alternatives to get their message across when they were placed at the center of the learning process. Finally, it is recommended for ESL teachers to incorporate critical reading skills into the curriculum and teach them explicitly to students. But before doing that, teachers should be acquainted with the appropriate methods to teach these skills and most importantly to give students an active role to play when they read by working in pairs and groups. If teachers do so, students will be able to hone critical reading skills and read more proficiently. Finally, it would be worthwhile for further research to be conducted to explore the impact of introducing critical reading skills with different sexes, ages, and fields of study at different stages in a Saudi context.

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Vocabulary Learning Strategies in ESP Context: Knowledge and Implication

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Abstract
The present study aims to explore the knowledge level and preferences regarding vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) among the EFL university students studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. It also investigates the impact of vocabulary learning strategies on EFL learners’ performance. A sample of twenty students from an intact class participated in the study. For data collection, a triangulated approach has been employed through the usage of a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, together with classroom observations. Moreover, the cumulative percentage of scores in the pre-tests and post-tests has been incorporated to investigate the impact of vocabulary learning strategies. SPSS software is used to calculate the T-test value. The findings demonstrate that the implementation of various vocabulary learning strategies has a substantial impact on the performance of the English language learners within the context of an English for Specific Purposes classroom. The findings have pedagogical implications in the teaching and learning of vocabulary within the ESP context.

Keywords: EFL learners, ESP context, vocabulary learning strategies

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Introduction
Language is the most important instrument of communication and having a large vocabulary is essential for the achievement of effective communication. When it comes to vocabulary in English as a global language, there is an abundance of words that seems nearly inexhaustible. In order to master language, learners are required to put in constant effort and practice. Learners’ ability to understand language relies heavily on their acquaintance with the used vocabulary which helps them to understand the ideas conveyed. This significance of vocabulary in the acquisition of a language is supported by Folse (2004, p.2) as he concurs, “… You can get by without grammar; you cannot get by without vocabulary”. In the same vein, Wilkins (1972; as cited in AlQhatani, 2015) emphasizes that:

There is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one has not got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to say. … While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. (p.97)

Without a doubt, research on vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) demonstrates the significance of vocabulary in the process of language teaching and learning. Indeed, knowledge of vocabulary results in better language comprehension and use. Likewise, Karatay (2004, p.21; as cited in Baskin et al.,2017) has put forward the indispensable importance of vocabulary “The ability of the four basic language skills to read, write, speak and listen, and to be able to use these skills actively is closely related to acquired vocabulary”. Furthermore, research on Vocabulary Learning Strategies demonstrates that vocabulary acquisition is crucial to language learning (Coady and Huckin, 1997; Harley, 1996; Nation, 2001; Read, 2000; as cited in Baskin et al.,2017). Schmitt (2010, p. 4) emphasizes the importance of vocabulary for language learners stating that "Learners carry around dictionaries, not grammar books.". Learners’ acquisition of new vocabulary is made easier when they use vocabulary learning strategies. Such strategies allow language learners to employ these practical skills both inside and outside of the classroom and therefore, empower them. What has been said so far about the importance of vocabulary acquisition is evident in Oxford’s (2017, p.244; as cited in LaBontee, 2019) definition of Vocabulary Learning Strategies as (VLSs) “teachable, dynamic thoughts and behaviors that learners consciously select and employ in specific contexts to improve their self-regulated, autonomous L2 vocabulary development”.

Indeed, this topic needs to be addressed in the context of Saudi EFL learners. Despite the fact that vocabulary learning is an immensely complex and vital field of study, it has been observed that more focus in the EFL classroom has been laid on grammar versus learners’ word knowledge (Al Qahtani, 2015). In fact, Swan & Walter (1984) argue that it is the most important and challenging aspect of language for language learners to learn (Baskin et al., 2017). On many occasions, students struggle to find the appropriate vocabulary when it comes to producing a comprehensible piece of language. Learners’ lack of vocabulary knowledge leads to stress and anxiety and, as a result, learners become demotivated and discouraged from participation in the communication or in the language learning process. Previous studies show that a large number of EFL learners at the tertiary level in Saudi universities have a low vocabulary size (Al-Nuaidi, 2003; Al-Masrai & Milton, 2012; Althalab, 2019). Years of experience in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) prompted the researchers to investigate why EFL students struggle in learning ESP vocabulary more than they do in English for General Purposes (EGP). Elicitation
of students’ responses for the aforementioned question reveals that the size and difficulty of ESP vocabulary is one of the main reasons. Hence, students’ concerns in their responses about the difficulty of learning ESP vocabulary must be addressed to help instructors and students understand the importance of vocabulary acquisition in the language learning process, and raise their awareness about the importance of VLSs. In fact, careful application of VLSs in students’ language learning adds to their attainment of high grades and facilitates the achievement of their primary goal of acquiring a degree. More significantly, VLSs assist students in the fulfillment of their objectives by allowing them to become more engaged and self-directed learners. Moreover, students pursuing higher education must be able to communicate effectively in English and VLSs would help them to increase the size of their vocabulary.

Research Objectives
This study aims to achieve the following objectives:
a) To investigate EFL university students' understanding of VLSs.
b) To determine which VLS is the most commonly used among EFL university students.
c) To look at the effect of VLSs on the performance of EFL students in an ESP course.

Research Questions
a) What is the level of awareness of VLSs among EFL university students?
b) Which VLS is the most commonly used among EFL university students?
c) How do VLSs affect EFL students' success in ESP classes?

Significance of the study
The current study examines EFL students’ knowledge and preferences about VLS and it explores how VLSs affect their performance in the ESP context. The findings may aid instructors in understanding the underlying causes of the difficulties encountered by learners in vocabulary learning within the context of English language classrooms. Furthermore, it may help to formulate methods that can make classes more engaging for the VLS users while enhancing learners’ participation in vocabulary development activities. No doubt that vocabulary growth is essential for overall English language proficiency. Indeed, having a broad language understanding is fundamental to providing learners with an education that equips them for the future labor market. Moreover, this need becomes even more relevant within the ESP context as learners deal with the jargon they will use in their future job. For that reason, this research was planned and executed to observe the adult EFL learners’ awareness of VLSs and also, to determine their utility in an ESP context.

Literature Review
The literature on Language Learning Strategies (LLS) suggests that when LLS had appeared, much emphasis was placed on other aspects of the language learning process rather than on vocabulary acquisition. After the evolution of several language teaching techniques, various eminent researchers realized the significance of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs). Thus, several taxonomies have been proposed for L2 acquisition to systematize and expand the use of vocabulary learning strategies. The taxonomies proposed by Oxford (1990), Schmitt (1997), and Nation (2001) are among the most popular taxonomies. Oxford (1990) classified VLSs into two main categories of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ strategies. Furthermore, the direct sub-strategies include ‘memory’, ‘cognitive’, and ‘compensation’ strategies, while ‘meta-cognitive’, ‘affective’, and
‘social’ strategies are the indirect ones. In 1997, Schmitt presented a more comprehensive taxonomy that classifies VLSs under ‘discovery’ and ‘consolidation’ strategies. Discovery strategies include ‘determination’ and ‘social’ strategies, whereas consolidation strategies include ‘social’, ‘memory’, ‘cognitive’, and ‘metacognitive’ strategies (Asgari & Mustapa, 2011). Nation (2001) classified the types of VLSs into three categories - planning strategies, source strategies, and processing strategies (LaBontee, 2019) Using planning strategies, learners can select words, aspects of word knowledge, and the strategies to be used. Learners can also use dictionaries, guess the meaning from context, or use background knowledge to learn information about words when they utilize source strategies. Processing techniques such as observing, retrieving, and producing might be employed to reinforce or coagulate previously learned knowledge. Undoubtedly, learners’ knowledge and attitude toward the use of VLSs would improve their performance in the language learning process. In the EFL context, adult learners need to use some VLS to augment their lexical competence and to gradually attain autonomous competence. Research has been undertaken to investigate the influence of Vocabulary Learning Strategies on various components of the language learning process in an EFL environment (Pratami & Margana, 2019). Previous research conducted in this area is important for the present study and therefore is described below.

Zhao (2009) examined how a five-week training program on metacognitive strategies affected college students' vocabulary learning. The research included a total of 134 students. The experimental group (N= 68) was trained for using cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies, whereas the control group (N= 66) was trained using only cognitive strategies. The experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-training test.

Noor & Amir (2009) examined the use of VLSs by a group of EFL learners and the data was collected from postgraduate students (N= 35) through the use of questionnaires. The findings show that a distinctive strategy was implemented by learners for the purpose of vocabulary learning. Notably, the strategies of memorization, dictionary strategies, and linguistic clues were the most commonly used. Conversely, the least used strategy was note-taking.

Asgari & Mustapha (2011) used the qualitative approach to look at the preferences of Malaysian ESL students majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language for various vocabulary acquisition methodologies (TESL). The results suggest that the learners' favorite VLSs were several including acquiring words by reading, using monolingual dictionaries, using diverse English Language media, and incorporating new English words into regular conversation.

Omar (2015) did research on Kurdish university students. Twenty male and female undergraduate and postgraduate students were chosen from various colleges and universities. The data shows that advanced L2 learners were aware of cognitive strategies for vocabulary recall. According to the findings, students employed these strategies in a variety of ways. For advanced learners, the use of dictionaries was found to be the most preferred technique, while the use of flashcards was shown to be the least preferred.

Taheri & Davoudi (2016) investigated the effect of the keyword vocabulary teaching strategy on language learning and the long-term retention of vocabulary in an EFL classroom context. They observed fifty Iranian EFL male and female students through the use of control and experimental groups. The findings showed a positive impact of the keyword teaching strategy on vocabulary learning and on long-term vocabulary retention. As expected, the experimental group outperformed the control group at the end of the treatment.
Baskin, Iscan, Karagoz, & Birol (2017) conducted their research to examine the use of VLSs by the learners in a Turkish University. Twenty-two students were given a questionnaire with twenty-five vocabulary items. The findings revealed that students' levels in language skills had a significant effect on the VLSs they employed. Furthermore, the most utilized strategies by the students were the 'determination strategies and the least ones were the cognitive strategies.

Altalhab (2019) explored how Saudi university students' vocabulary knowledge (N= 120) affected their proficiency to communicate in English. The average vocabulary size of Saudi EFL students at the tertiary level was found around 3000 words. Despite this great size of vocabulary, the majority of the students had low scores in the vocabulary low-frequency levels.

In light of the aforementioned studies in relation to VLSs, it is essential that students use these strategies in their language learning to establish an effective vocabulary learning approach. Moreover, this notion becomes more relevant within the ESP context where the size and difficulty of vocabulary are greater when compared to the EGP.

Methodology
In this section, we will discuss the design of the study, population, instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design
A mixed-method approach to research was used in this paper, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate students’ knowledge level and preferences for the use of VLSs. Three qualitative research tools were employed: a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were carried out on the pre-test and post-test scores using SPSS to quantitatively examine the influence of VLSs on students' performance.

Participants
A convenience sampling strategy which is a non-probability sample was selected to be used in this classroom research to collect the needed data. An entire class assigned for the researchers to teach was selected for the data collection. The population used in this study was students in the preparatory year program at a local university. Participants were all in the science stream and they were studying an ESP course in the second semester of the academic year. The majority of the students participating in the study received their pre-university education Arabic language medium and English was only one of the subjects they studied. All students in this sample were enrolled in the advanced-level English for General Purposes (EGP) course in the first semester of their preparatory year. The level of this EGP course was determined based on individual students' performance in an English placement test taken at the start of the academic year. Those participants were between the ages of 17 and 21.

Research Instrument
This research aims to examine students' knowledge levels and preferences for VLSs. Therefore, data were collected from the participants by answering questions given in an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews about their use of vocabulary learning strategies in their English learning. To obtain more comprehensive information, field notes from classroom observations were also utilized. Scores from the pre-test and post-test were used to compare the influence of a selection of VLSs.
Research Procedures
In this study, data was collected in phases. To begin with, field notes of ongoing class observations were kept. Then participants were given a 50-item questionnaire based on Schmitt's taxonomy (1997) to collect information on their knowledge level and personal preferences when utilizing VLSs. The items used in the questionnaire for this purpose were adapted from Noor & Amir (2009). Furthermore, students’ responses to the questionnaire were then elaborated on in the one-to-one interviews to get in-depth information about the responses they provided to the questionnaire. Finally, students’ pre-test and post-test scores were then analyzed to determine the impact of VLSs on students’ performance.

Data Analysis
The information gathered from both qualitative and quantitative research methods was examined in two phases. To begin with, the analysis was made using data from the questionnaire to determine students’ level of knowledge and preferences regarding the use of various vocabulary learning strategies. Data from field notes and interviews were then thematically analyzed, and the findings were interpreted to learn more about students' knowledge and preferences about vocabulary learning strategies. In addition, percentages and standard deviations were then calculated for both the pre-test and post-test scores as well as the standard deviations of both tests, were compared. Moreover, Paired t-test was run to examine whether there was any impact for the vocabulary learning strategies used by the EFL students on their performance within the ESP context.

Results and discussion
The findings from all types of data collected will be presented and discussed in this part to answer the research questions posed in this study.

Knowledge level of EFL learners VLSs
To notice the students’ knowledge level about vocabulary learning strategies, a questionnaire was administered. As a matter of fact, students were found aware of VLSs the majority of them viewed VLSs favorably. Statistics showed that 28.6% and 42.95% of the students have opted to the options of ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’, respectively, in the items stating that VLSs are helpful in learning new words. On the other hand, only 14.3% of the students have chosen the alternatives ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘neutral’, and no one has selected ‘disagree’ (as shown in figure 1). This small percentage may indicate that only a small group of the students showed negative or neutral attitudes toward VLSs.

![Figure 1: VLSs are helpful in learning new words](image-url)
To identify students’ knowledge level, a question was asked about their awareness of VLSs before the study started. Almost 53% (9.5% have selected ‘strongly agree’ and 42.90% ‘agree’) of the learners had knowledge of VLSs when this survey was collected, whereas just under 50% gave ‘neutral’ or ‘negative’ responses. (As shown in figure 2 below)

Figure 2: Students’ have prior knowledge of VLSs

Most students believed that using VLSs while learning new words does indeed help them to become more autonomous. In this regard, 23.8% of the students strongly supported this notion, 47.6% agreed with it, and 28.6% were neutral about it. None of the participants disagreed with this notion. This finding can be easily observed in figure 3.

Figure 3: Vocabulary learning strategies help students in becoming autonomous learners

It is worth noting that the results from the questionnaire illustrated that the majority of the students felt better equipped to learn new vocabulary items when using VLSs. This is because 14.3% and 57.1% of the students respectively strongly agree and agree with the notion that VLSs help them to deal with unknown words. However, 19% of the students are neutral and 4.8% disagree, and strongly disagree. (As shown in figure 4)

Figure 4: VLSs help students’ in dealing with unknown words
Furthermore, students’ opinions on the size and difficulty level of the vocabulary in the ESP course they were studying indicated that more than half of the sample (i.e., 53.3%) were found satisfied with the size of the vocabulary. Whereas 23.8% were neutral and dissatisfied, respectively, figure 5 shows the graphical representation of the statistics. 

![Figure 5: The vocabulary size is satisfactory in the ESP course](image)

The findings from the questionnaire revealed that the difficulty level of vocabulary is greater within the ESP course as compared to the EGP course which they had successfully completed in the previous (first) semester. Namely, 42.95% of the students went with ‘strongly agree’ and 33.3% with ‘agree’ that the vocabulary in the ESP course is more difficult than the EGP course. On the contrary, 14.3% of the subjects remained neutral, and only 9.5% disagreed with this statement (see Figure 6) 

![Figure 6: Vocabulary in the ESP course is more difficult as compared to the EGP course](image)

**The most Common VLSs among the EFL learners**

One section in the questionnaire was designed to explore students’ preferences for various VLSs. These items concerning preferences for VLSs were written using Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of language learning techniques. The data showed that students have preferences as per their own choices. Among the determination strategies, more than half of the students (57.1%) preferred to use the strategy of ‘guessing the meaning from context’ to understand the meaning of unknown words. On the other hand, 28.6% of students chose the strategy to 'consult a dictionary to figure out the meaning,' while 14.3% of them preferred to learn vocabulary by 'identifying the parts of speech of new terms.' As a result, it was revealed that 'guessing the meaning from context' was the most favored vocabulary acquisition approach in the area of determination. In terms of the social strategies, the majority of the students chose to consult their classmates about new vocabulary items rather than to consult the teachers. The most popular social strategy was' asking...
classmates,’ which was chosen by almost half of the students. Surprisingly, only 33.3% of the students preferred to ask their teachers about unknown words, whereas 14% preferred to ask native speakers. The findings of students’ preferences are in line with the results of Schmitt’s study (1997), which shows the high popularity of the social strategies among the students. Moreover, the most preferred strategy by 52.4% of the students among the memory strategies, was ‘learning vocabulary by making pictures and images’. The second preferred strategy in this category is ‘grouping works’, with a percentage of 42.9% of students favoring it. On the contrary, a small percentage of students (4.8%), selected the strategy of ‘making acronyms’ to learn new words.

Over half of the population (i.e., 57.1%) favored ‘taking notes’ on new vocabulary items when it came to cognitive strategies. In contrast, the strategy of learning vocabulary through ‘repetition’ was more popular than the strategy of ‘highlighting new words.’ The percentage of preference for both the strategies was 28.6% and 14.3%, respectively. In the area of metacognitive methods, more than half of the students (52.4%) favored the approach of planning vocabulary exercises, while 23.8% chose ‘monitoring’ progress and ‘evaluating’ progress, respectively. Furthermore, it is observed that the most preferred strategies are ‘guessing the meaning from context’ and ‘taking notes of the vocabulary’, corresponding to 57.1 %, and the least preferred VLS is ‘making acronyms’ with a percentage of 4.8%. Figure 7 shows the preferences of students for VLSs.

**Figure 7: Preferences for VLSs**

**Vocabulary Learning Strategies’ Effect on Student Performance**

To measure the impact of VLSs on students’ performance, the descriptive statistics method was used. The calculations show that the highest score achieved by the learner in the pre-test is 65%, and the achievement goes up to 99% in the post-test. A significant difference of 34% shows the relevance of VLSs for the learner. Similarly, the respective lowest scores in the pre-test and post-test were 25% and 26.5%. The difference between the two scores is similar, i.e., the student performed better on the post-test than on the pre-test by a margin of 1.5%. The numerical analysis of the data is shown in figure 8.
Further, when the mean scores of both the tests were compared, the results demonstrated that the difference is quite considerable. The mean of the pre-test scores is 43.75% (SD= 12.23), and the mean of the post-test is 67.6 % (SD=18.74). In figure 9, the red graph line representing the post-test scores indicates better performance in comparison to the blue line, which represents the pre-test scores.

To find out whether or not the impact of the VLSs is statistically significant, a T-test was run and the result demonstrates that the value of the T-test is 8.6207 and the two-tailed value is less than 0.0001. Also, the Standard Error of Difference (SD) is 2.767 which represents a statistically significant difference. As a result, all of the numerical data suggest that VLSs have a considerable influence on students’ performance. Likewise, the comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores of every student individually reflects this conclusion.

Conclusion
The goal of this study was to examine the EFL learners' experiences both qualitatively and quantitatively. In particular, students’ knowledge level and preferences for various Vocabulary learning strategies were investigated besides the impact of VLSs on students’ performance in an ESP course. It was found that the majority of the students have a good understanding of VLSs. ‘Guessing the meaning’ and ‘taking notes’ were the most popular VLSs, while 'using acronyms' was the least popular. It is possible that students employ several VLSs when acquiring a new
language; nevertheless, the data contradict this idea. The comparative analysis of the pre-test and the post-test scores showed a substantial difference in the results. Considering the interpretation of data, EFL students showed a significant improvement in their performance, as evident in the post-test scores. This also shows consistency with the findings in other studies (Zhao, 2009; Noor & Amir, 2009; Omar, 2015; Taheri & Davoudi, 2016; Baskin et al., 2017; Altalhab, 2019). Hence, explicit training on the usage of vocabulary acquisition procedures makes it easier for students to acquire new words.

As a result, the research has pedagogical consequences since it allows teachers to learn more about their students' knowledge levels and preferences for Vocabulary Learning Strategies. Getting to know such information on vocabulary learning may assist teachers in using better teaching strategies in the EFL classrooms, which would result in the achievement of both students’ and teachers’ objectives.

Limitations
A total of twenty female students participated in the study which may mean that the findings do not apply to the entire population. This limitation is common in educational institutions. It is not always feasible in educational institutions to conduct empirical research with a representative sample as researchers have to deal with intact groups in the way the institutions had already grouped students.

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References


The Responses and Attitudes of the University of Nottingham Students toward Learning Styles

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Abstract
This research was carried out to add to the current literature on learning styles by explaining various understandings of the topic and the previous research on it. Studies and information on learning styles and strategies are abundant, and the need for more research stems from the recent move towards student-centered classes. This paper is an attempt to do more specific research on the subject and answer the question of what the correlations are between learning styles and different factors such as gender and learner’s cultural background. This study was conducted at the University of Nottingham. Seventy students have participated in the survey, 34 males and 36 females. The participants’ nationalities were mixed, which was essential for the study; Kurdish (20%), British (40%), European States (10%) and Asian (17.1%). The questionnaire results were analysed by using IBM SPSS Statistics 21 software. Frequency tests, Correlation analysis, T-Tests, and One-way ANOVA test of the available data were studied. The findings show that Kurdish learners are auditory learners compared to other nationalities. Also, the study showed that language learners are more visually inclined learners than learners from the other majors. Finally, future researchers may expand on the findings of this paper by getting a larger sample.

Keywords: attitudes, gender, learning, learning styles, nationality, responses, strategies

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Introduction

The interest in examining learning styles differs from one field to the other. For instance, in psychology, the interest in learning styles started earlier in the 1920s when the prominent psychologist Carl Jung wrote his theory regarding the psychological types, which became the foundation of studying learning styles. However, in education, the interest started much later in the 1970s.

Students preferentially process learning in different ways, such as seeing and hearing, acting, and analysing. Every student has a unique and different learning style, enabling them to fit best within the learning environment. Research has shown that many students have learning styles that vary in psychological dimensions, and such individual varieties may influence many types of mental operations. As a result, learners may learn through different methods and under different conditions. For instance, visual learners learn through seeing; they are facilitator/instructor dependent, and they obtain knowledge through non-verbal gestures. Auditory-style learners absorb information through hearing and vocalising information. These learners primarily obtain knowledge by hearing, and they may comprehend auditory information better than written information (Gilakjani, 2012).

Learning styles occupy a vast space in academia as there is a belief that these studies may assist learners in deciding the best strategies that work for them as exploring such differences is essential. As will be explained in the following parts of this article, learners are different, and many factors like gender or intelligence affect their learning preferences. This research aims to identify the responses and attitudes among students at the University of Nottingham regarding learning styles and determine the learners’ perceived preferred ones. Also, the correlation between learning styles and gender will be examined. Furthermore, the participants from different backgrounds will be examined regarding the learning style they believe they possess. The results will be obtained through SPSS’s technical procedures and discussed with the research literature in this area.

This paper will answer the following questions: what is the correlation between learning styles and the field of study? What is the correlation between learning styles and nationality? What is the correlation between learning styles and gender?

Literature Review

Learning Styles Concept

Researchers have defined learning styles, and mostly the definitions share some characteristics. Sadeghi, Kasim, Tan, and Abdullah (2012) have defined learning styles as various approaches used by language learners or any other learner to learn a new language, for instance, visual or auditory. Sadeghi et al. elaborated that different learning styles give the learner a sense of direction and set the behaviour one adapts to the learning process. Wong and Nunan (2011) has asserted that learning style is a term used for the ways a learner employs to learn new information or skills. The learner uses the ways they prefer or is used to in learning. According to Wong and Nunan, the learner uses learning styles regardless of the subject, and they are relatively unchanged.
According to Cimermanová (2018), learning styles are merely characteristics learners consider when choosing learning strategies. Cimermanova has stated that learners do not stick with one style; instead, they possess more than one. However, although learners have a profile of learning styles, dominant styles are used in most situations. Lee and Kim (2014) have defined learning styles based on previous research as the way a language learner “receives, retains, and retrieves new information, knowledge, and skills” (p. 119) in different situations in the language learning process. Lee and Kim elaborate by saying that a learning style may be nature or nurture, meaning that the learner might possess a learning style naturally, or the learning style might be learnt through nurturing.

In Sadeghi et al. (2012) and Wong and Nunan (2011), learning styles have been categorised into three major parts. The first category of learning styles is cognitive style. The cognitive style consists of reflective versus impulsive, analytic versus global, field-independent versus field dependent. The second category of learning styles is the sensory learning style. Cassidy, Kreitner, and Kreitner (2010) have agreed with Sadeghi et al. in sub-categorising this category to “a) perceptual learning styles: Auditory learner, Visual learner, Tactile learner, Kinesthetic learner, and Haptic learner; b) Environmental learning styles: Physical vs. Sociological learner” (Sadeghi, 2012, p. 117). The third learning styles category is called personality learning styles. This category consists of “Extroversion vs. Introversion; Sensing vs. Perception; Thinking vs. Feeling; Judging vs. Perceiving; Ambiguity-tolerant vs. Ambiguity-intolerant; and Left-brained vs. Right-brained learners” (p. 117).

The Difference between Learning Styles and Learning Strategies

To learn the differences between learning styles and learning strategies, a description of learning strategies is needed. Widharyanto and Binawan (2020) has stated that the “main categories of language learning strategies; they are memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, effective strategy, and social strategy” (p. 481). According to Widharyanto and Binawan, these learning strategies have been divided into two different groups, direct and indirect, “The direct strategy consists of memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and compensation strategy. The indirect strategy involves metacognitive strategy, effective strategy, and social strategy” (p. 481). The first group is called direct, directly related to using the language. Since it is indirectly related to the use of the language, the second group is called the indirect strategy group.

Researchers have distinguished between what learning styles constitute and the various strategies; although the differences might be unclear for a reader, it is important to point them out. According to Oxford (2003) who is a seminal figure in research on language learning, especially learning style and strategies, a learner’s preferred way of learning is related to style. On the other hand, the strategies of learning are the specific steps learners undertake to learn new information or skills. Based on her analysis, it can be said that learning styles, to a certain extent, are subconscious decisions while choosing the learning strategies are conscious decisions by the learner. For instance, a learner might have a sensory learning style without knowing why. However, s/he then controls what actions are needed to learn the new information, “the learner consciously chooses strategies that fit his or her learning style and the L2 task at hand, these strategies become a useful toolkit for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning” (p. 2). Choosing suitable learning strategies, according to Oxford, is viable when the
learner is aware of their preferred learning style; otherwise, the learners might struggle in taking the necessary steps.

**Previous Research on Learning Styles**

As mentioned before, many studies have been conducted on learning styles, either theoretical or practical research. Experts like Dörnyei (2006) have lamented the lack of well-established understanding and measures for learning styles. Dörnyei has asserted that learning style is sometimes a personality type. Sometimes, it is referred to as a learner’s learning preference or aptitude, and these different understandings create unnecessary confusion that makes research on the subject difficult. According to Lee and Kim (2014), some studies question the usefulness of learning styles and the awareness of them to both teachers and learners, “several studies confirmed that matching learners’ styles with a teacher’s methodology or materials had little or no effect on the learners’ achievement” (p. 119).

Viriya and Sapsirin (2014) have declared that a prominent study was conducted in 1987 by Reid on 1388 students regarding their preferred learning style. The study has shown “Statistical analyses of the questionnaires indicated that NSS (native speakers of English) learning style preferences often differ significantly from those of NNSS (non-native speakers of English)” (p. 79). However, a study conducted by Wasanasomsithi in Thailand in 2003 has shown different results than the ones of Reid. According to Viriya and Sapsirin (2014), Wasanasomsithi’s study results “show that the learners prefer group learning and auditory style than individual or visual style” (p. 79).

Another study was conducted by Maubacha and Morgan (2001) to learn about the differences between males and females concerning their preferred learning style. Ahmed has found significant differences between the two genders regarding kinesthetic and auditory learning styles. The study showed that male learners preferred both of these learning styles while the female learners were almost indifferent. The females seemed to prefer one organised style. Ahmad’s study has found what previous research has found concerning the correlation between style and gender; (Maubacha & Morgan 2001; Wehrwein et al., 2007).

Nikolaeva and Synekop (2020) have said that, “learning style is a complex phenomenon which reflects different dimensions of an individual who needs variations in the ways teaching and learning take place” (p. 170). These two researchers have focused on the motivational learning styles and they have found that these learning styles, “influences the development of their skills” (p. 180).

Derkach (2018) has conducted a research learning styles amongst students from four different departments. Derkach found that there are several differences amongst the students in favouring a specific type of learning style. For instance, “Chemistry and pharmacy students have similar learning profiles” (p. 60).while they differ from the other two departments, technology and design.
Methodology
The aim of the study was to investigate which style the students at Nottingham University prefer in different studying areas within various nationalities, ages and sexes. The methodology used and the decisions are outlined in the following sections

Participants
Data for this study were collected using a questionnaire distributed to students at the University of Nottingham. The survey was conducted at both Jubilee and University Park campuses. The data were collected from 70 students (34 male and 36 female) of several nationalities, including Kurdish (20%), British (40%), EU States (10%), Asian (17.1%), and other nationalities (9%) As it is shown in table 1. Approximately 47.1% of the participants were male, and 52.9% were female. All the participants who were above the age of 18. The participants included undergraduate and postgraduate students studying different disciplines at the university, including languages, social sciences, engineering, natural sciences, health, math, business, and economy. The students were selected randomly from different departments to illustrate their responses toward learning styles.

Table 1 the percent of the nationalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationalities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU States</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other nationalities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Instruments
The questionnaire used in this study was composed of four multi-item scales. Several criteria were in mind when preparing the questionnaire. The authenticity and simplicity of the questionnaire were of the utmost importance. That is why before conducting the research, a pilot
study was done. Five participants were chosen, and they were given the questionnaire. The
participants found no difficulty in completing the task. Also, processing the data was a smooth
process which gave the researcher confidence in using the questionnaire.

Participants were asked to rate on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree,
neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree). The self-administered questionnaire was
designed in such a way that it aimed to capture the informants’ attitudes on the different learning
styles. Four variables were targeted with a total of 24 questions: six questions on the visual
learning style (s2, s5, s9, s11, s13, s16, and s23), six on the auditory learning style (s1, s7, s10,
s14, s17, s19), six on the kinesthetic learning style (s3, s6, s12, s15, s20, and s22), and six on the
interpersonal learning style (s4, s8, s13, s18, s21, s24).

The questionnaire also included questions on some personal background information:
gender, nationality, age, and area of study. The final version of the questionnaire is presented in
Appendix A. The questionnaire was piloted by distributing it to five students to measure the
reliability of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

Research Procedures
The questionnaire was carried out manually at various places at the University of
Nottingham, as the students were located at different campuses. The questionnaires were
distributed to the students in Hallward Library, Djanogly Library, and standard study rooms.
This procedure was chosen because it was believed to be a more efficient procedure
for accessing many students, and it is easy to hand out questionnaires.

All participants were briefed on the importance of the study; then, it was explained that
they had the right to stop at any point with no questions asked. The participants then filled out
the consent forms.

All the respondents were ensured of total privacy and confidentiality as they were
expected to provide their personal views and opinions regarding the subject under study. This
was to ensure that the participants felt very secure. All were informed that immediately after
completing the questionnaire; all the responses would be treated anonymously to divulge
participants’ identities. Completing the questionnaire took approximately five minutes. This
process of administering the questionnaires lasted for three days.

The problems and obstacles encountered in this study included difficulty convincing the
participants to allocate their precious time to respond to the questionnaire. Since many students
were busy reading for their exams and continuous assessments, many seemed to think that the
study was wasting their time. This may have led to the reckless answering of questions to
quickly complete the questionnaire without thinking thoroughly about the questions. This, in
turn, may have led to the collection of erroneous data as it would not have represented the
students’ genuine views on the subject under study.

Data Analysis
The questionnaire was coded to avoid difficulties while entering the data. The next step
was entering the data using the IBM SPSS Statistics 21 software. The coding used was as
follows: nationalities were coded numerically as Kurdish one, British two, European three, Asian four, and Others five. After that, the study area was numerically coded to distinguish participants easily while analysing the data: Languages 1, Social Sciences 2, Engineering 3, Natural Sciences 4, Health 5, and Math, Business, and Economy 6, to make the analysis clearer. Upon completion of coding, a frequency analysis was performed, and spelling mistakes were corrected. Subsequently, a reliability analysis was conducted to check the internal consistency of the items related to the variables and, at the same time to check Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

Regarding the visual learning style, six items were included in the questionnaire. It is worth mentioning the reasons for excluding some items. After conducting the reliability analysis, Cronbach’s alpha was .028, an insignificant result. Items two, five, nine, and 11 were omitted to increase the significance of the variable, and Chronbach’s alpha of .523 was reached, which is still insignificant. The insignificancy of the results tends to be how the items were interpreted. Consequently, the variable relates to visuality, but the items were more related to writing, which may have confused the participants and caused them to neglect the addressed items.

In the study, six items addressed the auditory learning style. The reliability analysis of Cronbach’s alpha was .404. When items one and 19 were discarded, the reliability increased to .567. Based on this, it seems the participants misunderstood items one and 19. Perhaps if the items had more explicitly involved listening, the participants might have understood the items and chosen correctly.

Cronbach’s alpha for kinesthetic learners was .525, and when item 3 was excluded, the value rose to .549. One reason for discarding this item was an assumed lack of accuracy in choosing this item since most of the participants spent less than five minutes completing the questionnaire. This, in turn, means that Cronbach’s alpha might have achieved significance if the participants had spent more time understanding the item, which is an essential item in the variable.

Furthermore, it is interesting to mention the reliability of the followers of the interpersonal learning style. The reliability of Cronbach’s alpha was .505 for the six items. For this reason, the noticeable misinterpretation of items 24, 21, and 18 should be considered, as when they were removed, Cronbach’s alpha reached significance (.797). Additionally, a new variable coded as “Sub age” was generated, dividing the variable “age” into three groups:

- 23 and under = 1
- 24-29 = 2
- 30 and above =3

A correlation between the newly computed variables with their mean scores and the “age” variable was calculated to determine their relationship.

Independent sample T-tests were done on the correlation between gender and the variables. The genders were coded as one for males and two for females. After conducting the T-tests, a significant difference could not be found in the results. The genders were subcategorised according to the countries: “Kurdgender, Engender, Eurgender and Asiangender.” to obtain a more identifiable difference. For every subgroup of the genders, various independent T-tests were conducted.
Finally, a one-way ANOVA was run to determine the potential relationships among the age groups and the target variables. The results did not yield significance. The sample size might have caused this, or it may be due to the variety of the age groups.

**Results**

After the data was collected, several statistical tests were conducted to determine the significance of the data concerning the different learning styles of students from different nationalities, ages, genders, and areas of study.

**Frequency Tests**

According to the frequency results, the students from the language area of study had the highest participation rate at 35.7%, and the natural sciences students had the lowest turnout at 7.1%. 40% of the participants were British compared to European students, at 10%.

**Table 2 study area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIOLOGY</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECONOMY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATIO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEER</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGREER</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRON</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINANCE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRENCH</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISTORY</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMANITY</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAW</td>
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<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDICAL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODERN L</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATURALS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHOLO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCAILS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlation Analysis

A bivariate analysis was conducted using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) to obtain all the significant related trends between the responses by the students on the different learning styles.

The variables correlated with the students’ responses in the study included the four learning styles: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and intrapersonal. Additionally, age, gender, nationality, and the areas of study of the individual students were included. The variables of age (r= -0.357, p<0.01) and gender (r= -0.363, p<0.05) were weakly negatively correlated in the responses of the participants, while Kinesthetic (r= 0.267, p<0.05) and visual were both positively correlated with the responses of the participants.

Amongst these individually significant variables, age strongly negatively correlated with the area of study of the participants (r= -0.357, p<0.01). Furthermore, a correlation was determined between certain learning styles. The auditory learning style (r= 0.267, p= 0.05) was positively correlated with the kinesthetic learning style, and it was also found out that there was a positive correlation between the visual and auditory learners (r= 0.319, p< 0.5). There was a positive relationship between visual learners and auditory learners. Moreover, a positive relationship was identified between auditory and kinesthetic learners.

T-Tests

An independent sample T-test was conducted for every unique subgroup. It was found that Kurdish males were more inclined towards the auditory style than Kurdish females. There was a significant difference in scores for men (M= 3.67, SD= 0.39) and women (M= 2.70, SD= 0.41), t(12) =4.33, p<0.05. However, the effect size was large (eta squared =0.60), with gender providing 60% of the variance in auditory. S-N-K post hoc revealed that Kurdish males are more likely to be auditory learners than Kurdish females. In the subgroups of the other countries, a difference could not be identified.
One-way ANOVA Test

The basic assumptions in this ANOVA test were a normal distribution across the entire population involved in the study. All the samples used in the study had the same standard deviation or variance and were selected randomly and independently.

The differences between the age groups and the variables was found using ANOVA, but it did not achieve a significant result. It seems that age is not a factor in preferred learning styles in this study. The relationship between nationality and variables was sought by using ANOVA but did not reach significance. It is supposed that nationality may not be a factor in learners preferring a particular learning style.

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was conducted between areas of study and the target variables. It was indicated that there was a significant difference in the perception of the visual learning style between the students studying languages ($M = 3.90, SD = 0.52$) and the students in the fields of math, business, economy ($M = 3.10, SD = 0.80$). Students in the language field were more visually oriented than students in math, business, and economy. Moreover, students from the engineering school ($M = 3.93, SD = 0.62$) were more visually inclined than those studying math, business, and economy. In addition, students in the natural sciences ($M = 4.10, SD = 1.08$) and students in the health and medical fields ($M = 4.08, SD = 0.86$) were more likely to be visual learners than those studying math, business, and economy.

The effect size was large (eta squared =0.14). The S-N-K post has revealed that math, business, and economy students are less visual than those in the other areas.

Discussion

The results show that learning styles have a real place within the learning environment. Regarding the research question, the correlation between learning styles and gender and nationality, among Kurdish males and females, males account for 80% of Kurdish auditory learners, while females make up only 20%. These findings may be explained through several reasons. Particularly among people from Kurdish backgrounds, a preference for this learning style may develop for male students, who may interact more and verbally express what they are learning. In contrast, females from such cultural backgrounds tend to be more intrapersonal learners. Another reason behind this preference for hearing information overseeing it could be that auditory learners find it easier to listen to a teacher than to read handouts (Gilakjani, 2012). Furthermore, perhaps the teaching strategies of the Middle Eastern countries suit auditory learners more. This result perhaps counters the theory that visual learning is the most widely used learning style. These results line with Viriya and Sapsirin (2014) in which non-native speakers’ learning style differ from the on of native speakers.

To answer the research question, the correlation between learning styles and the fields of study, a one-way ANOVA was conducted for the areas of study using visual learning styles. The highest scores belong to the language students, who strongly correlate with the visual learning style. A possible explanation for this result could be the area of the study itself; people who study in this field tend to retain information through pictures, images and graphs. Students studying languages might thus prefer the visual learning style, which is unpreferable to math, business, and economics students. Those students would likely incorporate active participation experiences since these subjects are best learned through experiences and involvement within a physical...
learning environment. It is interesting to note how Gilakjani’s (2012) research on Iranian EFL (English as Foreign Language) students supports this study. The majority of those students—50%—preferred the visual learning style. That research suggests that students use visual learning styles above all other styles. Another possible reason could be that the students with visual learning styles tend to have higher academic achievement levels (Gilakjani, 2012).

The findings of Derkach (2016) lines with the results of this paper. Derkach studied the field of chemical fields and found a similarity among students from the same field in learning style. Moreover, Ishak and Awang (2017) found the same similarities amongst history students. These findings further implement the idea that students in similar professions might have the same learning styles. Based on the findings regarding the field of study, it seems like nurture plays a stronger role than nature since students who enter a field get used to the learning style of their peers.

Conclusion
To summarise, this paper addressed the University of Nottingham’s students’ responses and attitudes towards various learning styles. A qualitative research method was conducted to obtain the main points. The significant findings for this sample can be summarised in two: First, due to a large number of Kurdish participants, it could be concluded that Kurdish males are more likely to be auditory learners than Kurdish females. Second, students of languages are more visually oriente learners than those in other areas of study at the University of Nottingham.

Limitations
Despite some exciting findings reported in this paper, there were a few limitations, without which it is believed that the paper could have achieved a better result. It is crucial to recruit more participants to achieve more significant results, particularly in balancing the participants concerning nationality and age. Therefore, a call for future research with more participants from different backgrounds is necessary.

I recommend that future researchers collect more data to make the findings more reliable; the number of participants was 70 and it is not enough to arrive at definite answers to the questions. Moreover, using more than one questionnaire adds to the authenticity of the results and makes the filed richer.

About the Author:
Pawan Asghar Talib is an Assistant Lecturer from Erbil, Iraq. Her Master’s Degree is in Applied Linguistics and ELT from Nottingham University, United Kingdom (2013). She has worked in different academic institutes. Her current research interests focus on Educational Psychology, Applied Linguistics, Classroom management and English Language Teaching. ID https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6449-7472

References


Appendices
Appendix A
Students’ Questionnaire

Dear participants,

The aim of this survey is to find out about the preferred learning styles of students of the University of Nottingham. It is completely confidential and there are no right or wrong answers, so you can be as honest as you like! The answers you provide are used solely for academic purposes in this project. In fact, if you decide in the end that you would prefer not to participate in this survey, you will be free to opt out without any consequence and the answers that you have given will be discarded and not analysed. Thanks.

Instructions:
Please cross X in the appropriate box to indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements as shown in the example below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I find classroom discussions useful for learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I tend to touch the words or papers when I read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I can remember things better if I study alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I prefer hearing a lecture or a tape rather than reading a textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I need frequent breaks while studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I remember better if I make lists or charts when I study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I like talking to myself when solving a problem or writing something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I am aware of my own strengths, weaknesses and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I can remember the theme tunes of my favourite TV shows / films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I dislike sitting still for a long time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I can enjoy my time when I am alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I think I learn better when I have the freedom to move around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>When I have a new idea I write it down or draw a picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I feel uncomfortable when I discuss my work with my friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now, could you please specify this background information?
Age:
Gender: □ Male □ Female
Nationality:
Area of study

By submitting this questionnaire, I agree that my answers, which I have given voluntarily, can be used anonymously for research purposes.
The Effects of Mobile Game-Based Learning on Saudi EFL Foundation Year Students’ Vocabulary Acquisition

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Abstract
Mastering vocabulary can be a challenge as a great deal of information is delivered in intensive English courses. This study investigates the effects of mobile games on EFL students’ vocabulary acquisition via the “Quizizz” application. A total of 56 female foundation year students from a Saudi Arabian university participated in this study. The purpose of the study was to explore the students’ attitudes, cognitive load and motivation concerning vocabulary acquisition. The study employed a mixed-methods approach. Two groups underwent a pretest and posttest to compare mobile game-based learning to traditional teaching methods. To examine the effect of this strategy on EFL students’ perceptions, both the control and experimental groups answered an online questionnaire. In a semi-structured interview, 10 participants from the experimental group expressed their perceptions towards mobile game-based learning. The study’s findings demonstrated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the posttest results. It is noteworthy that although learners of the control group practiced vocabulary via the conventional teaching method, they showed a high level of agreement towards implementing digital gaming for vocabulary learning, similar to the experimental group. Furthermore, the experimental group expressed their acceptance of this strategy as an effective way of facilitating, retaining, and alleviating cognitive load during vocabulary learning. EFL teachers are, therefore, recommended to integrate mobile game-based learning into their vocabulary lessons.

Keywords: Cognitive load, mobile-assisted language learning, mobile game-based learning, Quizizz application, vocabulary learning

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Introduction

In the last decade, technology has become ubiquitous in all aspects of our lives, including education, work, and even entertainment. It has also been incorporated into the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which has been further melded with the field of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) as well (Hellmich, 2021). In recent years, researchers have used MALL as a powerful tool for supporting English language teaching and learning (Panagiotis & Krystalli, 2020). In the context of teaching English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL), the evolution of mobile learning (as a contemporary sub-field) takes learning both inside and outside the classroom (Lin & Chen 2017).

Word knowledge is perceived as the backbone of language learning (Moeller et al., 2009), meaning that without an adequate vocabulary repertoire, the four essential skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) cannot be mastered. Therefore, the first thing that comes to learners’ minds when learning English is to use dictionaries, not grammar books (Schmitt, 2000). Consequently, many types of research have also been conducted on vocabulary learning through digital gaming in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), specifically in MALL, to enhance and facilitate second language acquisition (Alghamdi & Elyas, 2020; Al-Johali, 2019; Alharbi, 2020; Fageeh, 2013; Gamlo, 2019; Sanosi, 2018). The Saudi government’s efforts would be satisfactory in incorporating technology into the education system, specifically in English language teaching (Saqlain et al., 2013). The use of digital gaming tools has expanded in education with the increasing involvement of mobile technology in the last few decades (Alshumaimeri, 2008).

English Language skills cannot be practical without learning vocabulary efficiently and practically through effective tools. Accordingly, if educators continue to teach using the traditional method, intensive English courses may hardly be assimilated by the long-term memory. The purpose of this research is to explore how mobile games can provide an enjoyable learning experience that can boost motivation and reduce cognitive load, resulting in better comprehension and achievement. Therefore, the present study investigates the effectiveness of mobile-assisted language learning, specifically Mobile Game-Based Learning (MGBL), regarding vocabulary learning among preparatory year students. The primary objective of the research is to examine the effects of MGBL on EFL female learners’ cognitive load and motivation, specifically on vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, the study explores their attitudes towards utilizing MGBL, which offers a variety of gaming features. The investigation delimits its scope to EFL female foundation year students’ vocabulary acquisition at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. The perceptions of the participants are analyzed and discussed quantitatively and qualitatively.

The following research questions have been formulated to achieve the study's objectives:

1. How does mobile game-based learning affect female EFL students’ vocabulary acquisition?
2. Are there any differences in perceptions between the control and experimental groups concerning attitudes, cognitive load, and motivation related to MGBL?
3. How do female EFL students in the experimental group perceive mobile game-based learning for vocabulary acquisition?
Literature Review

Internet ubiquity has made integrating technology more effective at revolutionizing language education. The field of CALL has gained broad attention in the research of English language teaching theoretically and empirically (Fageeh, 2013). According to Gamper and Knapp (2002), CALL is defined as “a research field which explores the use of computational methods and techniques as well as new media for language learning and teaching” (p. 331). With the advance of technology and the use of handheld devices, the field MALL has emerged, which “differs from CALL in its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access across different contexts of use” (Kukulska-Hulme & Shields, 2008, p. 273). MALL and CALL were compared by Sari, Anwar, and Marifah (2022), who found MALL, using the Quizizz app, improved EFL learners’ vocabulary knowledge after using it as an assessment tool. Lately, ESL/EFL teachers have gradually adopted new teaching methods and techniques, deviating from the formal/traditional teaching methods to get noticeably effective results. Recent studies in KSA have focused primarily on MALL for vocabulary acquisition (Alghamdi & Elyas, 2020; Alharbi, 2020; Gamlo, 2019; Sanosi, 2018). Accordingly, MALL has been integrated widely with games, referred to as mobile game-based learning, for getting a remarkable result with second language learners.

The Effect of Mobile Games on EFL Students’ Vocabulary Acquisition

Due to the necessity of mastering vocabulary for competence in the target language, mobile learning games have been observed as a positive way to achieve tangible results with today's generation. Based on information gathered from the pretest and post-test results of the participants, studies on EFL learners in the KSA found that MGBL improved vocabulary acquisition when compared to conventional teaching and learning methods employed in the control groups (Alghamdi & Elyas, 2020; Alharbi, 2020; Fageeh, 2013; Sanosi, 2018).

By integrating the Quizizz platform with its gaming features, empirical studies on EFL learners found that the experimental groups who learned vocabulary via mobile games outscored their peers who used traditional teaching methods (BAL, 2018; Caroline & Grace, 2021; Huei, Yunus, & Hashim, 2021; Katemba & Sinuhaji, 2021). For example, Hui et al. (2021) noted a significant improvement in the vocabulary repertoire of EFL students who used the Quizizz app based on pretest and posttest results. Accordingly, the current study aims to employ the Quizizz application on the Saudi pre-intermediate level to examine its impact on their performance and perceptions.

EFL Students’ Attitudes towards Mobile Games in Learning Vocabulary

The literature has witnessed an increased focus on MALL, with more than 345 mobile-related technologies available for use in English language teaching and learning (Burston, 2014, as cited in Alamer & Al Khateeb, 2021). Mobile games have become popular with the digital generation, which has prompted researchers to investigate how MALL can enhance second-language acquisition through its integration with games. As a result, gamified mobile apps have been integrated into English language teaching and learning due to their positive impact on students' attitudes and performance.

To examine the impact of mobile learning games on EFL low achievers, Gamlo's (2019) study on Saudi EFL students, who were at a low level in the intensive English courses, described...
the MGBL as an exciting and memorable experience where they implied their willingness to continue using this strategy in learning English vocabulary. The willingness of A2-level students, who were regarded as low achievers, to learn vocabulary via mobile games was noticed when they were asked to comprehend and master 30 words weekly (Wang, 2017). Similarly, a study by Wichadee and Pattanapichet (2018) demonstrated the ease of use and enjoyment of the Kahoot app by showing that players could enhance their vocabulary skills faster and more efficiently when using the app than when using a conventional method.

The effectiveness of MGBL in facilitating the comprehension of vocabulary has been stated by many researchers (Dizon, 2016; Klimova & Polakova, 2020; Ozer & Kılıç, 2018). In a study in which Dizon (2016) developed Japanese ESL students' English vocabulary skills over ten weeks, students believed that learning with games facilitated their vocabulary acquisition. Besides, students in Ozer and Kılıç's (2018) study appreciated mobile learning because it made the educational process more effective and enjoyable by allowing them to work at their own pace. Due to this, mobile apps that focus on gaming characteristics have gained positive attitudes from EFL learners as tools for English vocabulary learning.

**The Effect of Mobile Games on EFL Students’ Cognitive Load**

In today’s digital era, many recent studies conducted on MALL and its role in enhancing one’s cognitive learning system during the vocabulary learning process (Hwang, Hsu, & Hsieh, 2019; Ozer & Kılıç, 2018). Using digital gaming to learn vocabulary did not overburden students' cognitive systems, according to the questionnaire and experiment results (Ozer & Kılıç, 2018). Researchers such as Zou, Huang, and Xie (2019) reviewed the effects of digital gaming on vocabulary learning in 21 research studies published in SSCI journals. They found the positive impact of mobile games on supporting both short- and long-term memory. Consequently, MGBL could enhance vocabulary retention without causing an overload during the learning process.

**The Effect of Mobile Games on EFL Students’ Motivation**

A lack of motivation among EFL learners is an issue that researchers and educators try to overcome by integrating various strategies and techniques that could enhance enthusiasm, interest, and engagement during the learning process in the EFL context. Many researchers have examined how digital games are used to create a motivating learning environment for EFL learners (Elaish et al., 2019; Gamlo, 2019; Kohnke, 2020; Razali, Nasir, Ismail, Sari, & Salleh, 2020; Sun & Gao, 2020). In Razali et al.’s (2020) study, the findings indicated the significant impact of extrinsic motivation, such as rewards and points as strong motivational factors, compared to intrinsic motivation on EFL university students. However, intrinsic motivation was significant in some studies concerning students' desire to play based on their expected learning gains, such as Tsai, Cheng, Yeh, and Lin (2017). Competition, curiosity, and interaction, which are the essential factors in intrinsic motivation, were noticed in the utilization of digital gaming applications such as Kahoot, Quizlet, and Nearpod in both synchronous and asynchronous learning environments on EFL learners' English vocabulary (Karaaslan, Kılıç, Guven Yalcin, & Gullu, 2018).

Previous studies have emphasized the role of motivation generated via mobile games on EFL students' academic achievement. The perception of 70 Chinese first-year students was
examined, after a gaming intervention, to find that the influence of mobile game-based vocabulary learning on students’ motivation and achievement was positive (Li, 2021). Video games were used as an experimental tool to teach vocabulary to English major students found that the experimental group acquired a large vocabulary within a short period (Calvo-Ferrer, 2017). They also felt the course was more appealing and helped them learn language effortlessly. Additionally, a study that employed three mobile games, including Quizizz, demonstrated the efficacy of mobile games in converting tedious English vocabulary lessons into fun and exciting experiences, thereby increasing students' self-motivation and mastery of the language (Aini & Ma'rifah, 2021).

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) was developed in the late 1980s by Sweller, which dealt with implementing instructional strategies to improve the human cognitive system’s limited capacity (Van Merrienboer & Sweller, 2010). Cognitive load is defined by Ozer and Kılıç (2018) as the ability to absorb and retain information without exerting excessive effort on short-term memory. It consists of extraneous, intrinsic, and germane categories. These terms are described as; 1) extraneous cognitive load represents the extra effort imposed by students' minds that impedes their ability to learn, 2) intrinsic cognitive load indicates the level of complexity of the tasks to be accomplished, while 3) germane cognitive load illustrates the desired amount of effort learners put into learning (Lin & Yu, 2017). The capacity of the human working memory to process novel information is limited. Consequently, working memory should be used to construct cognitive schemata, where the information could be classified and stored as a coherent knowledge structure in the long-term memory (Sweller, Van Merriënboer, & Paas, 1998). Evaluating mobile games’ efficacy in retaining vocabulary without causing cognitive overload is one of the areas that the current study aims to discuss.

Numerous theoretical perspectives related to the technology implications in the instructional field have been discussed to get a comprehensive idea of understanding users’ adaptation to new technology. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), one of the most common technological theories, predicts an individual's intention to utilize new technology. Two primary factors influence users' acceptance of the latest technology; 1) perceived usefulness and 2) perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989), which are related to learners' attitudes towards the newly applied system. TAM is used to predict users' attitudes towards how specific technology systems could improve task performance (Surendran, 2012 as cited in Prayogi & Wulandari, 2021), based on two primary constructs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Therefore, the level of acceptance can be determined by the users' responses to the TAM constructs.

Based on the reviewed literature, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature on the vital role of MGBL for vocabulary acquisition at the tertiary level, specifically the intensive English courses taught in the foundation year in the Saudi Arabian educational system. It is worth noting that few studies have conducted an in-depth examination via interviews to discover the impact of MGBL on learners' attitudes, motivation, and cognitive load. Hence, the present study will provide academicians and researchers with a helpful guideline for learning vocabulary, thus improving EFL learners' proficiency.
Methods

The study was carried out by adopting an explanatory sequential model of mixed-methods research (QUAN-qual), i.e., quantitatively driven by a supplementary qualitative approach. According to Dornyei (2007), "The goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either of these approaches but rather to draw from the strength and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies" (p. 167).

Participants

The study was conducted with 56 female students, in the foundation year, at the A2-level (Art / Humanities track), which is regarded as the pre-intermediate level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), during the academic year of 2021/2022. The students are a group of homogenous Arabic native speakers ranging from 17–21 years of age. Based on their voluntary participation in this study, the participants were categorized randomly into two symmetric groups of 28 learners each. The experimental group used the Quizizz application intervention as a mode of MALL, followed by the control group (who has been taught conventionally through the textbook) after conducting the proficiency pretest. The qualitative phase involved ten students from the experimental group participating in semi-structured interviews through the Zoom platform. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the experiment had been conducted at King Abdulaziz University (KAU), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), using Blackboard Collaborate, i.e., virtual classes.

Research Instruments

In the quantitative phase, the data collection was conducted through two methods; a quasi-experimental approach with two groups (control and experimental) and a posttest questionnaire that aimed to compare the perceptions of both groups towards MGBL. A quasi-experimental design is a research design used to test an intervention and its influence on the dependent variables (Creswell, 2012). A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree,” was employed to investigate the EFL foundation year students’ perceptions of MALL. All participants, i.e., both groups, filled out the online questionnaire. Since the questionnaire items were generic, i.e., they did not address any specific app, the aim was to gauge learners’ perceptions of the effectiveness of MGBL in acquiring the second language (L2) vocabulary. There were three variables included in the questionnaire: Attitudes, Cognitive load, and Motivation (15 items in total). The attitudes variable (5 items) was adapted from Uzunboylu et al. (2015), while the researcher theoretically created the cognitive load variable (four items). The motivation variable (six items) was adapted from the previous study conducted by Tsai et al. (2017) that included items nos. 10, 11, 12, and 14, while items 13 and 15 were adapted from Alamer (2021) (see Appendix A). The motivation and attitudes variables were modified after adaptation to meet the study requirements.

The qualitative phase of the study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with students about their experiences with MGBL in the EFL context. Semi-structured interviews “allow for an open response in the participants’ own words rather than a ‘yes or no’ type answer” as it is “conversational and informal in tone” (Longhurst, 2003, p. 105). The interview questions were constructed based on this study’s research questions and objectives. The interviewees used their mother tongue, the Arabic language, to facilitate the process of recounting the needed information.
An Overview of the Quizizz Application

The Quizizz application, an online formative assessment tool, is used widely for educational purposes due to its unique characteristics such as the leaderboard, memes, and activity reports that can be shared as Excel spreadsheets with the learners' parents in this study. Figure 1 represents the participants' rank on the leaderboard of this study during a vocabulary activity via the Quizizz platform. Educators can assign homework for additional practice via the Quizizz app, where students can respond at any time within the designated duration. The Quizizz app’s features have made it a preferred option for educators, especially in the English language field, to interest and motivate learners for second language acquisition.

Figure 1. The leaderboard of Quizizz platform

Research Procedures

The researcher experimented on two A2-level classes via Blackboard Collaborate. The researcher taught the experimental group, while the course English lecturer taught the control group. The total duration was four weeks. In the first week, the researcher provided an introduction and details about the experiment and information using the Quizizz app. Besides, a pretest was conducted online via Google Forms on both groups (control and experimental) to measure the students' vocabulary size before experimenting. In the following weeks, the participants in each group practiced vocabulary weekly (up to twice per week). They learned about seven words in each class, adding to a combined total of 40 words. The target vocabulary list was derived from the course content. The experimental group used the Quizizz application to answer the vocabulary activities. On the other hand, the control group practiced vocabulary through class participation, i.e., the traditional teaching method. In the last week, a posttest with 25 multiple-choice questions was administered to gauge the vocabulary size for both groups via Google Forms after the intervention. A total score of 25 was calculated for each pretest and posttest, where each question was worth one point. The duration for each test was 30 minutes which was accomplished during class hours.

Besides, an online questionnaire was filled out by both the groups directly after the intervention. The questionnaire was translated into the students’ native language, Arabic, and checked and proofread by an English-Arabic translator to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.
of the survey items. The experimental group’s data was collected via semi-structured interviews until the data reached a saturation point. Each interview lasted for about 20 minutes. The data was organized and prepared for analysis using NVivo software. All the raw data obtained from the interviewees was transcribed into English. As well as being a data analysis and interpretation process, the transcription helped turn the data into vivid pictures (Gillham, 2005). Concerning the confidentiality of the interviewees, the audio-recorder was used only after getting their approval to record their statements. The recording would ensure no significant points from them could be missed. The research confirmed that all the data was stored secretly behind pseudonyms/codes.

**Validity and Reliability**

The “content validity” was utilized to validate the vocabulary tests since the pretest items were obtained from the first five chapters. In contrast, the posttest items were derived from the rest of the coursebook’s chapters. Therefore, content validity is used as evidence to gauge the instruments’ validity by linking them to the target construct (Rusticus, 2014). For the questionnaire’s validity, two experts in the English language field checked the items of each variable and made amendments to suit the study’s aim and objectives. For reliability, on the other hand, a pilot study was conducted to check the items’ reliability and internal consistency. The reliability coefficient of the pilot study was .97, according to the Cronbach’s alpha test. For the semi-structured interviews, the validity of the interview questions was checked by two experts in the English language field. Besides, the "member checking" technique was used in this study for respondents' validation. It ensured accuracy and transferability, as well as credibility for the data since it could authorize the "triangulation of knowledge," especially in a study that adopted a "multiple data collection" method which "led to more valid interpretations" (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016, p. 1803).

**Data Analysis**

The quantitative data of the first and second research questions were analyzed using SPSS version 26. First, the mean differences in vocabulary acquisition were calculated between the pretest and posttest using paired samples t-tests, followed by finding the difference in the posttest scores using independent samples t-tests. Second, a duplicate copy of the same questionnaire was distributed using the online form to compare attitudes, cognitive load, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation between the two groups using the independent samples t-test. The third research question was answered by thematic analysis of data gathered through semi-structured interviews. The third research question was answered by thematic analysis of data gathered through semi-structured interviews.

**Results**

A total of 56 students participated in this study. The researcher divided them into two equal groups: a) Control Group and b) Experimental Group, which is appropriate to the experimental nature of the study. The calculations suggested that most of the participants in both groups were 19 years of age; 12 (42.9%) in the control group and 13 (46.4%) in the experimental group. Furthermore, 21 (75%) of the experimental group participants used MGBL, compared to only 15 (53.6%) for the control group. Mobile game-based learning was used by 21 (75%) of the experimental group participants, compared with 15 (53.6%) for the control group.
The Effects of Mobile Game-Based Learning on Saudi EFL

Alhebshi & Gamlo

The Vocabulary Tests for the Quasi-Experimental Approach

A paired-samples t-test was performed on both groups for answering research question one, as shown in Table 1. For the independent control group, the results showed a decrease in the tests’ results of the participants. For instance, the mean pretest score ($M = 18.61, SD = 5.38$) decreased in the posttest to ($M = 15.43, SD = 5.63$), $t = 2.76, p = .010$. The correlation between the pretest and posttest was estimated at $r = .39$, with the difference of $d = 0.52$. In contrast, the experimental group's results showed a significant improvement in participants' performance. For instance, the mean pretest score ($M = 16.39, SD = 5.80$) increased in the posttest to ($M = 19.50, SD = 4.44$), $t = -2.39, p = .024$. The correlation was estimated at $r = .12$, with the difference of $d = 0.45$.

Table 1. Paired-samples t-test results for the English vocabulary tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18.61</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>15.43</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16.39</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine whether there was any significant difference between both groups, an independent samples $t$-test was conducted to compare both the groups’ posttest results, following the intervention as presented in Table 2. There was a significant difference in the scores between the 28 participants who received the MGBL intervention ($M = 19.50, SD = 4.44$), compared to the 28 participants in the control group ($M = 15.43, SD = 5.63$) who demonstrated better vocabulary learning, $t = 3.00, p = .004$. The large effect size was noted at $d = 0.8$, indicating a high level of practical significance.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test results of the posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15.43</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Posttest Questionnaire

To check the reliability of the variables included in the questionnaire, Cronbach’s Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. For instance, the value of $\alpha$ should be higher than 0.7 (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). In this case, the figures were as follows: attitudes = .97, cognitive load = .91, intrinsic motivation = .93, and extrinsic motivation = .78

Regarding the second research question, an independent samples $t$-test was used to compare the perceptions of the control and experimental groups for variables. In general, there was no significant difference between the perceptions of the two groups. As presented in Table 3, for attitudes ($t = 0.57, p = .570$), the means were not significantly different between the control ($M = 3.85, SD = 1.09$) and experimental groups ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.49$). For intrinsic motivation ($t = 0.04, p = .971$), the mean score for the control group ($M = 3.86, SD = 1.01$) was virtually the
same as that of the experimental group’s ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.41$). The magnitudes of the differences in the means of cognitive load ($d = 0.06$) and extrinsic motivation ($d = 0.25$) were very small.

Table 3. Testing different perceptions of both groups by using independent samples t-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Control group ($n = 28$)</th>
<th>Experimental group ($n = 28$)</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attitudes</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>.570</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cognitive Load</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Intrinsic Motivation</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Extrinsic Motivation</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.343</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$df = 54$

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Concerning the third research question aimed at the experimental group, the semi-structured interview, with its eight guiding questions, was used to gain further insights into participants' perceptions of the impact of MGBL on students' performance in acquiring English vocabulary. The elicitation of the interview questions was based on the study variables (attitudes, cognitive load, and motivation), i.e., the questionnaire items indirectly. Table 4 displays the three themes emerging from the interviewees’ responses, namely, 1) acceptance of MGBL for L2 vocabulary learning, 2) effectiveness of MGBL in integrating the ‘Quizizz’ platform, and 3) MGBL and vocabulary retention.

Table 4. Themes, codes, and segments of the experimental group interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Segments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acceptance of MGBL for L2 vocabulary learning</td>
<td>a) Active learning</td>
<td>● Increasing the interaction between classmates (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Answering the online-game questions enthusiastically (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Enjoyable learning environment</td>
<td>● Learning without getting bored (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Having fun and learning at the same time (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Ease of use</td>
<td>● The application was easy to be used in the virtual class (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Effectiveness of MGBL integrating ‘Quizizz’ platform</td>
<td>a) Promotion of critical thinking</td>
<td>● Thinking and trying to find out the correct answer (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Ignoring irrelevant answers (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Motivation improvement</td>
<td>● Results and levels of learners on the leaderboard (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Memes (pictures) after each question (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Facilitation of learning</td>
<td>● Knowing the correct answer immediately (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. MGBL and vocabulary retention</td>
<td>a) Enhancement of long-term memory</td>
<td>● Improving comprehension instead of memorization (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Similar to the actual test method (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the participants interviewed expressed a positive attitude towards mobile game-based learning. These positive points of their acceptance were in light of the following aspects:
active learning, enjoyable learning environment, and ease of use which were supported with extracts from the interviewees' responses.

With active learning, the participants mentioned that the used app increased the interaction between classmates. For example, one student said:

Mobile game-based learning is enjoyable since it increases the interaction among learners, as all students have a chance to participate and evaluate the gained information at the same time while answering the online questions more than the traditional teaching method. (S2)

For its practicality, more than half of the interviewees stressed the seamless use of the Quizizz app in the virtual English class. Therefore, these aspects reflected the participants' acceptance and their positive attitudes towards integrating MGBL for vocabulary acquisition.

Regarding the interviewees’ perceptions of MGBL's effectiveness in integrating the Quizizz platform, three points were identified: promoting critical thinking, motivation improvement, and facilitating learning. Promoting critical thinking was emphasized as a positive impact of mobile game-based learning in the EFL context. One of the participants stated her experience as follows:

While I was trying to answer the vocabulary questions of the online game, I was thinking and trying to relate what I had already studied in the vocabulary lesson to find out the most related answer to each question of the game. (S6)

Additionally, half of the interviewees considered the similarity between the application-a feature that facilitated the recall of some of the vocabulary adopted by digital gaming and the actual test of asking questions. For example, one participant said: " MGBL helped me remember the vocabulary at the time of the test, as it is very similar to the real test method, which led to its usefulness in facilitating and remembering as well." (S10) MALL, Therefore, with its gaming features was highly appreciated by the study’s participants.

Discussion
The Effect of Mobile Games on EFL Students' Vocabulary Acquisition

Based on the current study’s findings, the mean scores of the female participants in the experimental group, who used mobile game-based learning for vocabulary acquisition, implied a significant improvement in their performance. This indicates that integrating digital gaming to facilitate second language vocabulary acquisition was tangible based on the results gained from the quasi-experimental approach. The study's results are consistent with those of other studies using the quasi-experimental design on EFL learners in the KSA (Alghamdi & Elyas, 2020; Alharbi, 2020; Fageeh, 2013; Sanosi, 2018), demonstrating that mobile learning games enhance vocabulary learning in EFL classrooms. For example, in Sanosi’s (2018) study, the experimental group that underwent mobile game-based learning outperformed the other group that used traditional teaching methods. Accordingly, the present study found that technology increased the learning rates compared with the conventional way. Hence, this finding suggests that the applied treatment, namely the Quizizz app, stimulated the experimental group participants' performance compared to the control group. This study's results support previous studies that have found
MGBL, particularly the Quizizz app, enhanced EFL vocabulary learning (BAL, 2018; Caroline & Grace, 2021; Huei et al., 2021; Katemba & Sinuhaji, 2021).

**The Effect of Mobile Games on EFL Students’ Attitudes, Cognitive Load, and Motivation**

Regarding female EFL learners’ attitudes towards MGBL, this study suggests that female EFL learners at the pre-intermediate level hold positive attitudes towards MGBL as a strategy for learning English vocabulary. Despite the higher mean scores of the control group compared to the experimental group, the difference was not significant since both the groups expressed positive attitudes toward using MGBL to learn EFL vocabulary. A strong relationship between mobile game-based learning and learners' positive attitudes for EFL vocabulary acquisition has been reported in the literature (Dizon, 2016; Gamlo, 2019; Klimova & Polakova, 2020; Ozer & Kılıç, 2018; Wang, 2017; Wichadee & Pattanapichet, 2018). For example, Gamlo (2019) studied the attitudes of low-level Saudi A2-learners after integrating mobile games to enrich the students’ English vocabulary learning, where they described the experience as enjoyable. They also expressed the intention of continuing to use the game in the future. Hence, the current results might be due to today's generation's captivation of mobile gadgets, which has made MGBL more appealing than traditional learning/teaching methods such as pencil and paper.

Concerning the impact of MGBL on EFL learners' cognitive load, the experimental group scored higher than the control group even though the difference was not significant. Henceforth, the applied mobile game effectively alleviated the cognitive load during English vocabulary learning. The findings in this investigation are compatible with other studies conducted on participants who used mobile games in English courses for vocabulary learning (Hwang et al., 2019; Ozer & Kılıç, 2018; Zou et al., 2019). To further support this premise, Zou et al. s’ (2019) study found that digital game-based learning contributes to the development of long- and short-term memory in students learning English vocabulary. Hence, it seems possible that these results are due to the enthusiasm and engagement with the activities that MGBL could generate.

As for the learning motivation aspects, the current study's findings addressed the effect of MGBL on both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of EFL students for vocabulary learning. In general, digital gaming has been investigated for its potential to create a motivating learning environment for EFL learners using mobile technology (Elaish et al., 2019; Gamlo, 2019; Kohnke, 2020; Li, 2021). Despite no difference between the experimental and control groups in their intrinsic motivation, there was a high level of favorable agreement among participants of both groups regarding intrinsic motivation. The present study confirms previous findings showing learners' tendency toward intrinsic goals while learning vocabulary through mobile games, such as curiosity for learning new words and preference for challenging and interactive learning (Karaaslan et al., 2018; Tsai et al., 2017). A possible explanation for these results may shed light on learners' preference for technology that supports gaming features as an alternative to the conventional methods.

In contrast, extrinsic motivation was higher in the experimental than the control group, primarily driven by external factors, such as getting good grades, impressing people, and passing the final exam. In a similar vein, Razali et al. (2020), who used the Quizizz app, found that participants' interest in receiving rewards and points played a substantial role in motivating them extrinsically rather than intrinsically. A possible explanation could be related to the participants'
pre-intermediate level, indicating their limited ability to use language, which shifted their interest to simply getting points and passing the final test.

**Insights on Mobile Games for Vocabulary Learning from Experimental Group**

The interview data provided insights into the learners' views on the implementation of mobile game-based learning, where a positive correlation was found between all variables of the present study. Therefore, students' learning, especially vocabulary, seemed to benefit from the integration of mobile gaming through the Quizizz app. According to numerous studies, digital gaming increases learners' acceptance of learning English as a foreign language (Dananjaya & Kusumastuti, 2019; Klimova & Polakova, 2020; Ozer & Kılıç's, 2018). In the present study, students perceived MGBL as an active learning tool, which increased their enthusiasm through interaction with classmates. This result is consistent with the findings of an earlier study that showed digital games for vocabulary learning promoted social interaction among EFL learners (Dananjaya & Kusumastuti, 2019). Accordingly, their positive attitudes towards accepting the MGBL tool for vocabulary acquisition support the TAM that reflects the relationship between the two constructs: Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the applied tools on learners' attitudes.

Another theme that emerged from the interview data was the effectiveness of the MGBL integrating the 'Quizizz' platform. The most notable aspects of the interviews related to promoting critical thinking, improving motivation, and facilitating learning. Based on a similar study using the Quizizz app, researchers found that mobile learning can motivate students by allowing them to track their progress on the leaderboard and see how many points they've gained (Razali et al., 2020). The app also seemed to be beneficial for the retention of English vocabulary. For instance, in the interview, various students pointed out that their ability to retain new words had improved when they learned through MGBL, indicating an enhancement of long-term memory. This finding is also supported by many previous studies (Hwang et al., 2019; Ozer & Kılıç, 2018; Zou et al., 2019) in which learners stated the role of MGBL in reducing the cognitive load in the EFL context. According to the given results, the tool implemented in this study had assisted learners by alleviating the cognitive load on their working memory. This improved the learners’ comprehension as the load exerted was desirable for optimum knowledge acquisition. The phenomenon is called the 'germane category' in CLT.

**Conclusion**

This study investigated the impact of MGBL as a tool for vocabulary learning among pre-intermediate foundation year students in Saudi EFL virtual classrooms. Two groups, experimental and control, were created to assess the incremental improvement in their performance, employing pretest and posttest. According to the independent samples t-test of the posttest results, the experimental group outperformed the control group. Since both groups perceived MGBL positively for the utilized variables, the difference in their perceptions was not significant. The input may also be considered acceptable and non-stressful, i.e., without increasing the cognitive load on the student, if EFL learners are perceived as motivated. As for the study's limitations, it was geographically delimited to King Abdulaziz University and only included female participants. Additionally, the study focused on foundation-year students at the A2 level. In this regard, the study results may not represent all university students; hence, integrating a larger sample size could help to generalize the results to a bigger population. For
future research, a longitudinal experiment is needed to examine the effect of its implementation on knowledge retention. Additionally, the replication of the study would be required along with a significant sample of participants and a wider geographical area, i.e., selecting other universities in Saudi Arabia, to evaluate the app’s efficacy on a larger scale.

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References


Appendices

Appendix A

Students’ questionnaire

Demographic part
Q1. What is your age?
   - 18
   - 19
   - 20
   - 21 and more

Q2. Have you ever used mobile game-based learning?
   - Yes
   - No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I believe that MGBL facilitates English vocabulary learning.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I believe that MGBL is interesting for vocabulary acquisition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I believe that mobile game-based learning enhances my willingness to</td>
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<tr>
<td>learn new vocabulary</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I believe that MGBL is a means of improving English vocabulary.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In general, I like using MGBL to learn new vocabulary.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive Load</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. MGBL encourages students to use high-level thinking skills.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. MGBL facilitates the process of vocabulary retention.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. MGBL puts less pressure on my memory.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I had no difficulty in memorizing the vocabulary gained by MGBL.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Intrinsic goal orientation (Motivation)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I like playing challenging learning games in the classroom because</td>
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<tr>
<td>they enable me to learn new things.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I like mobile game-based learning because it raises my curiosity.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. If I have the chance, I will choose mobile game-based learning for</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary acquisition in the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B. Extrinsic goal orientation (Motivation)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I use mobile game-based learning only to get better marks in the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I use mobile games for learning English only to impress the people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>around me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I use mobile game-based learning only to pass the final exam of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the English course.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Linguistic Landscape of Bilingual Shop Signs in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract
Shop signs are a visible indication of the linguistic landscape of a place, hence the need for public policies to control, particularly, bottom-up signs in situations where there are issues, such ensuring consistency and correct representation in the second language. To investigate the linguistic landscape of bilingual shop signs in Saudi Arabia, this study examines the lettering in bilingual shop signs in shopping malls in Riyadh and Jeddah in terms of relative size, information, and the quality of English-Arabic (E-A) and Arabic-English (A-E) transliteration or translation. This was done in view of the national policy in Saudi Arabia which aims to ensure correct Arabisation when inconsistencies have been observed in the Arab world. Moreover, it gives an indication of the linguistic landscape, which is necessary given the need to prepare the kingdom for the Saudi 2030 Vision and cater to the growing number of international visitors. Altogether, 184 signboards were observed and categorised, of which 68 were shortlisted for further analysis. Of these, 54 were A-E signs and 17 were E-A signs, with two in both categories. The majority (83.3%) of signs were bilingual with slight variation in relative size and display of information. Same sized lettering was displayed in 66.7%, and the same information in 64.8%. Remedial suggestions are given for language policy-makers to address the issue found of a few inconsistent and erroneous transliterations and spellings, which together accounted for 9.3%. Overall, the case is not as bad in Saudi Arabia as noted in some other Arab countries.

Keywords: English-Arabic transliteration, English-Arabic translation, bilingual shop signs, language policy, linguistic landscape

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Introduction

As we go about our daily lives, we are surrounded by language everywhere. We see it on large commercial boards, shop signs, road signs, other buildings, and in the form of instructions. Such signs represent the cultural, social, historical, political and economic state of the place where they are displayed. In view of their significance, some governments set regulations on the public use of language, and they devise a language policy to control how language is used in public. This control over language use has attracted the attention of researchers in different fields.

Studies refer to the language observed in the public sphere in specific places as a “linguistic landscape” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Less commonly, it is also referred to as “semiotic landscape” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Studying these linguistic landscapes, public signs have often been focused on for exploring the phenomenon of linguistic construction, and to resolve potential communication gaps resulting from inaccurate or inconsistent signage.

Linguistic landscape has been studied as early as the 1990s by Landry and Bourhis (1997) in their empirical study on “linguistic landscape and ethno-linguistic vitality.” Linguistic landscape was referred to as “the visibility of languages on objects that mark the public space in a given territory” (Gorter, 2006, p. 8), such as road signs, street names, shop signs, names on buildings, advertising billboards, and personal visiting cards. According to Landry and Bourhis (1997), the linguistic landscape serves as both an informational marker and a symbolic marker for communicating the status and relative power of linguistic communities in a particular place. It is the scene where public life takes place.

The various objects that shape a linguistic landscape may be categorised into top-down and bottom-up objects. In this scheme, shop signs are bottom-up because they are made by individual social actors, namely shop owners and companies, rather than by national and public institutions in the case of top-down signs. However, public policies that seek to control shop signs bear an influence on how bottom-up objects are arranged. Further classification could be according to type of object, the area of activity and geographical locality. In the case of the present study, the examination is of shop signs as bottom-up objects influenced by public policy, initially those in Riyadh and Jeddah, and of all areas of activity. Within this context, namely the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Arabic is the official language. Still, English is widely spoken, and among the non-Saudi population, many speak Urdu, Hindi, Tagalog, Indonesian, Turkish and more. Differences between Arabic dialects are not considered.

The study aims to describe the linguistic landscape of bilingual shop signs in view of the current language policy in Saudi Arabia. This initiative taken to investigate the linguistic landscape of bilingual shop signs in Saudi Arabia was approved by the Governorate of Makkah province to support the “correct Arabisation” of English words used on them. A website was created for this purpose; to introduce the initiative and to collect more data from other areas of Saudi Arabia through an online survey. The Saudi Ministry of Commerce insists on the correctness of the Arabic language used on shop signs, as well as on receipts, bills, cards and menus. Strict conditions have been outlined on their website, which, if violated, a penalty of up to fifty thousand riyals could be applied (Akhbaar24, 2020). Customers can also file reports on such violations. The following is stated on the Ministry’s website for displaying trading names: “The trading name should consist of Arabic or Arabized words/phrases, and it should not contain any
foreign words.” (Ministry of Commerce, 2020, article 3) Exceptions are only made for international companies registered abroad, well-known companies with international brands, and those with shared capital and nominated by the Minister.

The drive to use Arabic or Arabising language in public is also strongly present in other sectors in Saudi Arabia, including education and sports. For instance, mobile applications made for educational, health and shopping purposes are typically in Arabic, and, most recently, names of football players on the shirts they wear are in Arabic. The sports minister legislated using the Arabic language for football players’ names as an echo for the initiation of using Arabic in most sectors. This move is considered a vital source to save the Arabic language and culture (2020, Al-Jazeerah Newspaper). Despite these attempts, however, the ground reality in the Arab world reflects widespread breach and misuse of the language rules and regulations (Al-Athwary, 2014; Alomoush, 2015; Jamoussi & Roche, 2017). Many shops continue to disregard them by using other non-Arabic languages. The present study has attempted to shed light on these linguistic breaches, if any are found to exist in Saudi Arabia, to offer remedial suggestions and to address the growing deviation with respect to bilingual shop signs.

In 2016, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced the implementation of its 2030 vision. Its main goals include diversifying the economy, and developing public service sectors, particularly health, education, infrastructure, recreation and tourism. People living in Saudi Arabia are currently witnessing the impact of globalisation as the vision or plan is being implemented. For instance, more foreign investors are being attracted to establish their businesses in the country, and many tourists worldwide are keener than before to explore its historical gems. To address this diversity, many public spaces display bilingual linguistic objects to guide local and the growing number of international passers-by. However, some contain inaccuracies and inconsistencies in translation and/or transliteration. Therefore, this research focuses on the following two aspects of the linguistic landscape in Saudi Arabia from which the research questions can be derived:

- Describing and analysing the current linguistic state of bilingual shop signs translated from English into Arabic and vice versa in a sample of shopping malls in Riyadh and Jeddah.
- Suggesting remedial work for language policy-makers.

The study addresses the following questions:
1. What is the present linguistic landscape of English-Arabic and Arabic-English bilingual shop signs in Saudi Arabia like?
2. What issues are observed in terms of transliteration and translation, if any?
3. What remedial suggestions can be made for language policy-makers to address these issues?

The research addresses the gap in the literature of recent studies in Saudi Arabia focused on shop signage, and examines the linguistic features and issues of transliteration and translation.

**Literature Review**

The phenomenon of bilingual shop signs in linguistic landscapes has been studied previously. Those conducted in specific areas include Ben-Rafael, E., Shohamy, E., Amara, M. H., and Trumper-Hecht, N. (2006) on Jerusalem; Dimova (2007) on Veles in Macedonia;
Backhaus (2007) on Tokyo in Japan; Jingjing (2013) on Beijing in China; Al-Athwary (2014) on Sana’a in Yemen; Amer and Obeidat (2014) on Aqaba in Jordan; Alomoush (2015) also in Jordan; Nikolaou (2017) on Athens in Greece; Shang and Guo (2017) on Singapore, and Bianco (2018) on Turin in Italy. Similar studies on the linguistic landscape of a different set of bilingual signs include those by Guo (2012) on public signs in various places, and Jamoussi and Roche (2017) on road signs in Oman, Wafa and Wijayanti (2018) on multilingual signs in religious areas in Indonesia, Lu, Li, & Xu (2020) on rural tourist destinations in China, and Yang & Kim (2021) on road signs in South Korean and Japan. Studies conducted generally on linguistic landscapes with a comparative view include Ben-Rafael, et al. (2006) on Jerusalem. The focus of these aforementioned studies has typically been on gaining insight into multilingualism, exploring the extent of the presence and usage of multilingual signs, their impact, and examining reasons for making them or errors or inconsistencies in them.

**Studies in non-Arab countries**

In the Far East, Backhaus (2007) aimed to provide insights into multilingualism in Tokyo in terms of the language used on signs to see what can be gained on language contact. The study defined a linguistic landscape as capable of telling us:

> In an instant where on earth you are and what languages you are supposed to know… [and] provides a unique perspective on the coexistence and competition of different languages and their scripts, and how they interact and interfere with each other (p.145)

Furthermore, the researcher identified a city as “a place of language contact” (p.145), given the observation that signs in public spaces are the most visible reminder of the languages used. Highlighting this prominence of the concept of language contact and the role of signs in revealing a linguistic landscape may have prompted the further investigations in this field of linguistics.

A few European studies, namely Dimova (2007), Alexander (2017) and Nikolaou (2017), allow for some comparisons to be drawn based on separate investigations in neighbouring countries. These studies examined only shop signs for the extent to which English is used in the commercial context. Dimova examined the English used in names, slogans, headlines, and notes in shop signs in Veles to see whether the type of shop is a factor. This was confirmed, as more technical business types were more likely to use English than non-technical or essential shops. All internet cafes used English words and expressions. This was followed by bars at 88%, boutiques at 48%, 33% of restaurants, and barbers, and bakeries and grocery shops at 20-25%. There was no case of anglicization among the butchers and pharmacies present in Veles.

Greece is officially a monolingual country, but there is a significant number of shops that employ languages other than Greek in their signage. (Nikolaou, 2017) This is often done creatively, either monolingually, or in combination with Greek, “resulting in a situation of written multilingualism, with English emerging as the strongest linguistic player.” (p.160) The sample comprised 621 shop signs. Notably, the study results strongly suggested that the multilingual character of commercial signs is more symbolic than informational. This could reflect a desire to project a sophisticated, trendy and cosmopolitan outlook. That is, the presence
of multilingual signs was not significantly accounted for by tourism; rather, they expressed “values and ideologies associated with the cultures” they represented, and English emerged as the most popular due to its “unrivalled position among the foreign languages present.” (p.175)

The linguistic landscape in Beijing is similar, where different foreign elements have been combined creatively with the native Chinese flavour creating a “a harmonious linguistic environment.” (Jingjing, 2013) The majority of shop signs were monolingual, in Chinese. These accounted for 72% of the signs in their sample. Signs additionally containing English accounted for a little over half at 52%. Notably, shop signage in China is managed under the Republic’s language policy, which seeks to standardise Chinese while propagating English and promoting minority languages. The policy, as the author quotes it, specifies how language is to be used in signs:

Standardised Chinese characters shall be used as the basic characters in the service trade where both a foreign language and the Chinese language are used in signboards, advertisements, bulletins, signs, etc., as is needed by the trade, the standardized Chinese characters shall be used as far as the Chinese language is concerned. (Article 13)

This situation is in contrast with Singapore, where Chinese also dominates the linguistic landscape of shop signs, but English is almost compulsory on all signs as well (Shang & Guo, 2017). Chinese-English bilingual signs are common, but there is also a lesser presence of the Malay, Tamil and other minority languages on shop signs in the country. The shop signs were observed in neighbourhood centres to discover how local shop owners address multilingualism in Singapore’s ethnically heterogeneous and linguistically hybrid society. Chinese text is typically positioned on the top in a larger font size to make it prominent as the primary shop name. The researchers (Shang & Guo, 2017) argue that this linguistic landscape in Singapore shows the importance of “social factors such as the state’s macro language policy, demographic structure, as well as ethnic and cultural identity construction” (p.183).

The national language policy, in this case, prioritises English in Singapore, which ties with its role in domestic communication and alignment with globalisation. In the government’s official signage, English is dominant rather than Chinese, and the deviation from this in non-official signage reflects the assertion of local cultural identity by the population. Tokyo provides a more extreme case in comparison with China and Singapore (Backhaus, 2007), although the study was conducted much earlier. The city has a largely monolingual society in which only 3.6% of residents are registered as foreign. Despite this, the landscape comprising non-official signs is still multilingual, but at the same time, Japanese predominates heavily on official signs accounting for 99.1% of top-down signs. As may be expected, a translation or transliteration is given in multilingual signs for the sake of foreigners, and its absence indicates the signs are for the native Japanese population.

The study in Jerusalem conducted by Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) shows the potential divisive role of language and how linguistic landscapes can be expressions of sociopolitical influences. Their study gathered data from both public and private areas and it highlighted certain effects of the language used in signs on Arab-Jewish identity and multilingualism, and the driving forces behind how language is used in those signs. As may be expected, Hebrew is
predominant in Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian localities, whereas Arabic is the predominant language in East Jerusalem where there is resistance to using Hebrew. This demarcation of the linguistic landscape is closely aligned along cultural or religious lines, which is also evident by the limited use of immigrant languages like Russian in some Jewish neighbourhoods. Likewise, the global status of English is apparent in both Arab and Jewish localities, and its usage reflects its third position among the three main languages of Hebrew, Arabic and English despite English not being recognised as an official language. Bilingual and multilingual signs are mostly prevalent in East Jerusalem, where Arabic dominates. There, two-thirds of signs were trilingual as Arabic-English-Hebrew, 50% were found to be bilingual as Arabic-English, and 21% were Arabic only.

The diversity of linguistic landscapes within the same city through the use of language in signage is even more significant in Turin where several major and minor languages coexist (Bianco, 2018). Her study examined shop signs related to commerce or the presence of Italian, English and minority languages in monolingual, bilingual and multilingual signs. The role of social actors was also considered in the construction and perception of the public sphere. As in the study of Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), linguistic landscapes in specific areas are aligned with culture. Italian dominates the city, but English is the most frequent language. Multilingual and multi-ethnic areas exhibited other local languages. As for the role of actors, this was found to depend on context-dependent choices made based on identity, motivations, the cultural environment, socio-economic interests including external influences, and other indexical considerations.

Notably, although there is no national policy in place to affect the linguistic landscape in Italy, there are local regulations in some Italian cities, such as in Florence and Bologna, where non-Italian languages are regulated for commercial signs. These regulations require an Italian translation in case of making signs in foreign languages except for loan words that have already entered Italian. The population largely favour the use of English on signs. In Turin itself, there are similar but less stringent regulations that also require including an Italian translation for signs written in a foreign language.

Studies in Arab countries

Of the few studies conducted in Arabic-speaking countries other than Saudi Arabia (Al-Athwary, 2014; Amer & Obeidat, 2014; Alomoush, 2015; Jamoussi & Roche, 2017), Al-Athwary examined errors in translation of bilingual shop signs in the streets of Sana’a. He found that almost a third (130 signs out of 398) contained translation errors, which were then classified into errors relating to spelling, grammar and lexicon.

Similarly, road signs in Oman have also been found to contain inconsistencies in their romanisation (Jamoussi & Roche, 2017). The main source of these inconsistencies is believed to be hesitancy between local and standard varieties of the language. This has arisen due to contradictory principles of romanisation. However, the researchers do not consider harmonisation of these principles alone to be sufficient. They emphasise the need for “carefully thought out decisions with broader linguistic policy overtones” (p.58) and favour transcription over transliteration.

The first Jordan study centred on Aqaba tried to show the present status of English in the
city, reveal why English is used and the attitudes of shop owners towards English as a foreign language, and explore the influence of English on the language used in the local business sector and whether English is also used elsewhere (Amer & Obeidat, 2014). Most of the shop signs in the selected sample were found to be in both Arabic and English. However, English was more commonly used to attract the attention of foreign customers, and was found to be associated with globalisation, modernity, prestige and decor. Compared to Arabic, English is viewed more positively, and is becoming more familiar in the city. Since many English words have already been adopted in the local Arabic dialect, Arabic transliterations were present on some signs instead of their Arabic equivalents.

The second study conducted in urban Jordan by Alomoush (2015) was extensive, involving analysis of over 8,000 street signs around half of each were found to be monolingual and multilingual. The languages used were MSA Arabic and English, whereas minority languages were significantly marginalised on both top-down and bottom-up signs. As such, the findings conform to those in the first Jordan study of Amer and Obeidat (2014), but an additional noteworthy finding was the absence of native Jordanian Arabic on top-down signs. On bottom-up signs however, Jordanian Arabic is used to emphasise local culture, and various minority languages also appear on them in commercial and cultural contexts. As for the use of English, there is a stark difference between top-down and bottom-up signs in terms of the rationale for doing so. Whereas the government favours English to support economic development, communication with foreign tourists, and education, the use of English by shopkeepers is more for “appealing purposes” besides communicative and symbolic purposes. Bilingual signs, which are also popular, are justified “to advocate linguistic tolerance and global identity, promote local names and cultural references, meet the social needs of people and avoid taboo expressions in Arabic” (Alomoush, 2015, p.230).

Some previous studies are notable for having been conducted in the same context of Saudi Arabia as the present study: Aldholmi (2010), Blum (2014) and Alfaifi (2015), on signage in general but the latter including shop signs as well in particular. Aldholmi’s (2010) study examined the linguistic landscape of Riyadh with respect to signs in various places that included offices, businesses, government buildings, and as found on instructions. The purpose of the study was to ascertain why and how English is used in signage and identify differences between three parts of the same city. Two key reasons emerged in this study; the signs were written in English to attract wealthy and foreign customers, and due to English being the dominant global language. Further analysis showed that many of the signs do not comply with the government’s language policy. Linguistic differences were also apparent within Riyadh, as English was used differently from one area to another. There were differences in attitude toward the use of English in signs among business owners from different areas of the city. In some cases, these differences were in conflict with each other.

The study by Alfaifi (2015), examined a variety of signs (shop, street, road and billboard) in Khamis Mushait, in the southwest of the kingdom. The focus of his study was to examine how English is used in signage, and to find out whether Arabic or English outweighed the other in two different locations. A difference was noted between a tourist area and the non-tourist central commercial zone. The tourist area was dominated by the Arabic language where 37% of the signs were exclusively in Arabic and there were no signs exclusively in English. Even in
bilingual signs, English was only used for common words to indicate the type of place, such as parks, restaurants and pharmacies. In contrast, the commercial zone was visibly affected by globalization, given that English was more widely used in signage there compared to Arabic. Within this zone, bilingual signs were more common, and monolingual signs in Arabic were fewer at 20%.

The greater use of English was justified on the basis that the commercial zone had many shops selling technological appliances and other things considered essential for both local citizens and foreigners. The researcher identified the following causes: urbanisation, prestige, modernity and globalisation. Further analysis of all the signs in both places showed that full translation in English was more common at 57% compared to transliterations, and the use of bilingualism was not influenced solely by the dominance of English, but rather, for adhering to regulations. However, the researcher advocated for a clearer government policy to make an official stance concerning use of the native language of Arabic and to systematise the use of foreign languages.

**Language Policies**

Language policies are typically arranged to protect the native language, whether it is a majority language, or as in the case of Basque a minority language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2009). It usually has three components: one that deals with language practices; the language choices made with respect to beliefs, opinions and ideologies, and language management in terms of planning and intervention (Spolsky, 2004). The latter may be explicit or implicit, and directed at either reinforcing or changing beliefs and practices related to language.

As far as signage in Arabic and English is concerned, both languages have what May (2006) described as ‘instrumental values’ based on their examination of Jordan’s state policy, as both are important languages compared to minority languages with only ‘sentimental values’. Arabic remains the dominant language, but whether English constitutes a language having instrumental values in Saudi Arabia as well remains to be seen. In Jordan, their language policy was designed to protect other minority languages and prevent their loss of Arabic. Language policies therefore have a role to play to protect minority languages.

In Jordan, however, there is also an issue of the use of non-standard varieties of English in both official and non-official signage. English is promoted like in Japan while simultaneously advocating for Arab nationality. These needs have shaped its policies to ensure conservatism and linguistic purism, and effectively making it a multilingual language policy. The recognition of translation and transliteration errors or inconsistencies in signage, and variations in the use of sign even within the same city or area, specifically signage in a foreign language, also suggests the need for controlling them and targeting language policies at signs in public places. The existence of language policies also rises the issue of how effective they are, that is, the extent to which signs comply with these policies or not, and the purpose behind the policies, which would indicate what the government hopes to achieve.

Huebner (2006), who undertook an examination of the linguistic landscape of 15 Bangkok neighbourhoods, highlighted how variations in linguistic landscapes reflect “a disconnect between official versus de facto language policy” (p.37). Despite the government of
Thailand offering a tax incentive for including Thai on commercial signs, not everyone takes advantage of such incentives. If they do add text in Thai, it is typically in small print and in a corner. This situation reflects the position where the government seeks to promote Thai as the official national language, but English is the de facto language of wider global communication. However, the variations are also indicative of social status, relative power and the nature of the commercial activity. In Japan, the situation is different where Japanese is adequate for daily life. Still, a language policy has been implemented to promote communication skills in English in recognition of it as an international language.

A more successful implementation of a language policy can be seen in places like the Basque region of Spain (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). Cenoz and Gorter compared the linguistic landscapes of Friesland and Basque where majority and minority languages exist alongside each other with the language policies taking place and in a situation where the dominance of English is becoming increasingly pervasive. The analysis of over 975 signs showed a stark contrast between the two places on the use of minority languages. The majority languages of Dutch and Spanish remain prominent in signs in both places respectively in terms of usage, size and position of text. However, the language policy arranged to protect the minority language is more visible in Basque than in Frisian where the use of bilingual signs is common. Where English is present, it is used in commercial signs as information for foreign visitors, but it also serves an increasing symbolic function in both populations, and because it is claimed to increase profits for businesses. Moreover, the researchers deem the widespread use of English in public as “one of the most obvious markers of the process of globalisation” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2009, p 57). The researchers concluded that linguistic landscape serves more to provide information about written communication among language users than it does to reflect language use in oral communication.

According to Al Zumor (2019), language issues have always been of central concern in Saudi Arabia, and “various policy statements have attempted to cover status, corpus, acquisition, and prestige planning” (p. 409). Notably, the rationale behind these policies in Saudi Arabia has typically been on “coping with economic, social, political, and educational changes” while also maintaining the integrity of the kingdom’s cultural, national and religious identity (p. 409). This, it is claimed, has been the guiding principle, but it remains to be seen when the sub-landscape of bilingual shop signs has been shaped and impacted by its policies.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

The shaping of linguistic landscape according to society, culture, public policy, etc. suggests the existence of relationships and influences, which some scholars have pointed out. For instance, the Bourdieusard perspective on codes in the linguistic landscape claims that the one which dominates and others that have secondary importance should be explainable in terms of the power relations between dominant and subordinate groups. This is evident from those studies where power relations are important, such as Ben-Raefel, et al. (2006) on signs in Jerusalem, and where the global importance of English has been established, such as Aldholmi (2010), Amer and Obeidat (2014), and Alfaifi (2015) in Arab countries including Saudi Arabia.

**Methods**

**Instruments**
The present study takes a descriptive approach to illustrate the linguistic landscape of shop signs. Data for the study were collected from a select number of Saudi shopping malls located in Riyadh and Jeddah, the two largest and most populated cities in Saudi Arabia, during the year 2020. The shop signs were photographed using smartphone devices, and the lettering was later categorised and analysed.

**Procedures**

The signs were classified as either A-E (Arabic to English), E-A (English to Arabic) of Arab local brands, and E-A of English international brands. The latter were excluded from this study since the policy does not apply to them. The following codes were then used in analysing the data on each signboard:

- **Ln (number of languages)**: M – monolingual (one); B – bilingual (two); T – trilingual (three), or more than three
- **Lu (language used)**: A – Arabic only; E – English only; AE – Arabic & English; AO – Arabic & other non-English; EO – English & other non-Arabic; O – other (neither Arabic nor English)
- **S (relative size of the lettering in non-monolingual signs)**: S – same; A – Arabic is larger; E – English is larger; O – other non-Arabic/English is larger
- **I (relative information in non-monolingual signs)**: S – same; A – more in Arabic; E – more in English; O – more in other non-Arabic/English
- **Tlit (quality of transliteration on transliterated signs)**: C – clear/readable; N – non-standard/variable/questionable or not so clear; E – erroneous/ambiguous/unclear
- **Tlat (quality of translation on translated signs)**: C – correct/readable; N – non-standard/variable; E - erroneous/ambiguous/unclear

**Results**

A summary of the results of this study is presented in Table 1 below. A total of 184 signboards were observed, of which 68 signs were included in the shorter sample for subjecting them to further analysis. Out of this selected sub-sample, 54 were classified as A-E signs, 17 as E-A signs of Arab local brands, and 2 appear in both categories. The remainder 116 signs classified as E-A of English brands were excluded from further analysis, as explained further below:

Table 1: Summarised results of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Signs</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Size &amp; Information (non-monolingual signs)</th>
<th>Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ln</td>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-E signs</td>
<td>M=9</td>
<td>A=9</td>
<td>A=7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B=45</td>
<td>E=0</td>
<td>E=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T=0</td>
<td>AE=45</td>
<td>S=36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>O=0</td>
<td>O=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-A signs of Arab</td>
<td>M=0</td>
<td>A=0</td>
<td>A=0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results for the category of A-E signs show that the majority of signboards (45 out of 54, or 83.3%) are bilingual by displaying in both Arabic and English, with the remainder (9 or 16.7%) making up monolingual signs in the native language of Arabic only. There was no sign in any other language. There are neither any monolingual signs in English nor any trilingual signs or use of lettering from any other languages besides Arabic and English.

In terms of relative size, most signs display the Arabic and English lettering in about the same size (36 or 66.7%). Otherwise, most of the disproportionate letterings give prominence to Arabic (7 or 12.9%), with only a couple of signs on which English was displayed larger (2 or 3.7%). In terms of relative display of information, again, this is about the same in most of the signs (35 or 64.8%). However, there were some signs with extra information in Arabic (8 or 14.8%), and a couple with more in English (2 or 3.7%).

With respect to transliteration and translation, twice as many signs have transliterations rather than translations (32 compared to 16). Also, the transliteration or translation was evident both ways. On some signs, the Arabic wording was original and either transliterated or translated into English, and on others, it was vice versa. Considering the transliterated and translated signs together, while the majority of them are correctly transliterated or translated in the other second language (43 or 79.6%), there are a few cases where the quality is questionable (2 or 3.7%), and a few also where it is erroneous (3 or 5.6%).

**Examples of A-E signs**

The majority of signs examined were bilingual. In a typical bilingual sign, only the name is displayed and equal importance is given to both Arabic and English in terms of size:

![Alshaya](image)

*Figure 1. Alshaya*

The name, most often in Arabic, is simply transliterated (*Figure 1.*). There is no need to translate them in these cases. Where there is extra information, it is usually to make the type of shop clear, and a translation included in English, as in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Magrabi

Whereas almost all of the bilingual signs display the Arabic and English lettering separately, there was one sign in the sample with an unusual bilingual display where the two letterings overlapped each other giving a creative impression (Figure 3.) (here the words are translations of each other):

Figure 3. Faces

For some reason, jewellery shops are the ones more likely to have a monolingual sign, as in Figure 4. below, which proudly displays its name exclusively in the native Arabic language with no English on it at all:

Figure 4. Majuhuraat Almuhyasan

In comparison, another jewellery shop has a bilingual display with Arabic much larger than English (Figure 5.), although the fact that it is a jewellery shop is only made explicit in English, albeit in small size. It is an extreme case of text displayed disproportionately smaller in the second language.

Figure 5. Sulaiman Al Othaim Jewellery

In a similar but opposite case, Al-Rifai Bakery has only written its name Al-Rifai in English in a smaller size (Figure 6.), whereas the fact that it is a bakery is only mentioned in
Arabic and is therefore extra information in the primary language that is not evident in English.

Figure 6. Alrifai

Figure 7. below is another good example of a rare bilingual sign in which Arabic is prioritised both in terms of size, and to a larger extent, in terms of additional information:

Figure 7. Armal

One of the rare opposite cases can be seen below in which the extra information is in English although the relative sizes of the main text are the same:

Figure 8. Shaden

Transliteration is evident in both ways. Whereas some transliterations are in Arabic, others are in English. For example, words such as ‘Express’ and ‘Baby’ are English words transliterated into Arabic. This shows that the more widely recognised English forms have been used in favour of their Arabic alternatives, which would be ‘Tifl’ (طفل) in the case of ‘Baby Fitaihi’:

Figure 9. Baby Fatihi
The case is similar for words such as ‘Mobily,’ ‘Nayomi’ and ‘Zain,’ but this is understandable since they are internationally recognised brand names. Words such as ‘electronics’ are also retained by transliterating them in Arabic:

*Figure 10. Play phone Electronics*

Errors in transliteration or translation are not common, but among the few cases are two, which happen to be jewellery shops (Al-Alamyyah and Al-Shalawi). It suggests that jewellery shops tend to have the most issues when trying to transliterate or translate into English. Not all jewellery shops have erroneous spellings though. There are many without any such an issue, as in the case of Damas, Danat and Dorar. Incidentally, Danat and Dorar are both plural forms of the words *danah* دانة and *durrah* درة respectively, which mean a pearl, so the use of these words are benefitting for the type of shop. In the case of Al Shalawi, the error is evident in the spelling of ‘jewellery’ with the second or middle ‘e’ missing in the UK spelling:

*Figure 11. Alshalawi Jewellery*

**E-A Signs of Arab Local Brands**

A total of 17 further signs observed were classified as E-A signs of Arab brands with only two exceptions, namely Early Learning Centre (*Figure 12.*) and Balabala (*Figure 13.*) Almost all the signs (88%) are bilingual, display lettering in Arabic and English in about the same size, give the same information in both languages, and give transliterations that are all clear. The sign in *Figure 13.* is exceptional for displaying its English lettering in a relatively larger size than the Arabic lettering, whereas all other signs display both in about the same size.

*Figure 12. Early Learning Centre*
Figure 13. Balabala

The sign for Grill and Chill (Figure 14.) is one where, like Early Learning Centre (Figure 12.), the English and Arabic sizes and information are the same. Still, like a few others, the logo is exclusively in English lettering. Additionally, this particular sign is one in which the English name contains sounds that are not present in Arabic (/g/ and /ʢʃ/). Consequently, the Arabic transliteration uses the nearest Arabic equivalents, which can be considered unavoidable without using additional foreign characters. There are two other similar cases: /ʃ/ is substituted for /v/ in ‘Velton.’

Figure 14. Grill & Chill

**E-A Signs of English International Brands**

A further 116 signs observed were classified as E-A signs of English brands. These signs were not analysed because they are not local brands and are therefore exempted from following the Ministry of Commerce rules to use Arabic names, or to provide a transliteration or translation in Arabic. They use brand names in the international language of English for consistent global recognition, and analysing these signs is not the focus of this paper.

**Additional Observations**

A closer examination of the type of shops in the sample revealed other remarks than initially anticipated. As mentioned before, jewellery shops are the ones more likely to have monolingual signs. When they do display bilingual signs, Arabic is displayed more prominently, i.e. larger in size, and they are more likely to make errors in translating. Monolingual signs are also common among local telecom or technology companies, given that two in the selected sample fit this description, namely Fifa Lilitsalaat and Hamzah Lilitsalaat.

Al-Alamyah, Arabian Oud, and Coffee and Crispy stand out for including both a transliteration and a translation, whereas in all other signs, the primary language is either transliterated or translated in the secondary language. Oud refers to a stick or aroma in Arabia, so the choice of word is befitting for perfumery, but the phrase is only half-translated, where Arabian is a translation of Alarabiyyah /`әlәrәbi:ya/, but Oud is transliterated instead. This aligns with its adoption by other non-Arabic brands globally. Except in the case of Coffee and Crispy, however, the quality of the transliteration or translation is questionable. A further three signs also have transliterations or translations assessed as being non-standard or erroneous, and three more signs are included in Table two below, where letter substitutions have been made:
Table 2: Signs with questionable or unusual transliteration or translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Full Name on Signboard</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Arabic</td>
<td>In English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>العالمية</td>
<td>Al-Alamyah or International</td>
<td>A to E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>مجوعات الشلوي</td>
<td>Al Shalawi Jewellery</td>
<td>A to E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>العربية للعود</td>
<td>Arabian Oud</td>
<td>A to E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>تشو</td>
<td>Cho</td>
<td>A to E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>جربيل أند تشيل</td>
<td>Grill &amp; Chill</td>
<td>E to A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>لمي</td>
<td>LMA</td>
<td>A to E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>تيرانوفا</td>
<td>Terranova</td>
<td>E to A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>فيلتون</td>
<td>Velton</td>
<td>E to A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>جراج</td>
<td>Garage</td>
<td>E to A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Al-Alamyah’s signboard (Figure 15.), English is a non-standard transliteration of what should be transliterated from Arabic as ‘العالمية’ /alʕalami:ah/ ‘Al-Alamiyah’ although the additional translation of ‘international’ is correct. Furthermore, the translations of its three key products as extra information provided, also have spelling issues. ‘Jewellery’ is spelt as ‘Jewelery’, ‘Watches’ as ‘Swatch,’ and ‘Diamonds’ as ‘Diamond.’ This sign, therefore, has issues in both transliteration and translation. It is also noted that the voiced pharyngeal fricative /ʕ/ sound, which has no equivalent in English, is usually either replaced by the glottal stop /ʔ/, or substituted by the letter A or U.

Figure 15. . Al-Alamiyah

The signboard of ‘Terranova’ (Figure 16.) is a unique example of where instead of substituting a letter for its nearest equivalent, as in the case of /ʕ/, /g/, /tʃ/ [ch] and /v/ substituted by /ʔ/, /ʃ/ [ʃ], /tʃ/ [tʃ] and /f/ respectively in the signs of ‘Al-Alamiyah’, ‘Grill & Chill’ and ‘Velton’, a non-standard letter is used. Unlike Velton, where /f/ is used for the /v/ sound, /v/ itself is used, albeit represented by <ف>, which looks like a ‘faa’ <ف> with three dots instead of one. This is an allophone of the Arabic phoneme ‘faa’ sometimes used to write foreign names and loanwords. It has the correct /v/ sound required and is used to avoid writing with /f/ as an alternative which is not quite the same.
As for the sound /g/, Figure 17. shows how an Arabic transliteration can be misleading and incorrect. The word ‘garage’ is transliterated in Arabic as جراج /dʒaraadʒ/ by using the Arabic letter ﺊ for /dʒ/, whereas it should be pronounced closer to /garaʒ/. The Arabic Language Virtual Academy (ALVA) devised the symbol ﺢ to represent this /g/ sound in 2014 (ALVA, 2014), but it has not been widely adopted outside of academic circles.

Figure 16. Terranova

Discussion

The present study extends the research conducted previously by Aldholmi (2010) and Alfaifi (2015) in Saudi Arabia. The former focused more on the underlying reasons for using English on signage, and found differences in attitude to using English, and found widespread non-compliance with the government’s language policy. The second investigated and noted differences between two different locations, and advocated for a more explicit government policy and systematisation on using foreign languages. In comparison, the present study did not investigate reasons for using English, nor differences between locations. However, non-compliance was not found to be an issue; rather, some minor inconsistencies and erroneous transliterations and spellings were noted.

Assessment of the Policy

The national language policy governing signage in the Saudi Arabia aims to ensure “correct Arabisation” of the English words used in them. The requirement is to have the trading name in Arabic or using “Arabized words/phrases” without any foreign words except in the case of international companies and brands. The observations, for which the data is presented in the appendix, noted that all 68 of the signs in the sub-sample of those analysed further, which were of only local/Arab brands, were either bilingual in the majority of cases, or monolingual in Arabic only where no English has been used.

The Present Linguistic Landscape

Previous studies on shop signs in linguistic landscapes show a conflict between two forces in non-English countries. On one hand, nationalism encourages use of the native or national language, and on the other hand, the pressure of globalisation demands to use English. However, countries have accepted making bilingual signs, thereby protecting the local language while also benefiting from global recognition. The linguistic landscape of shop signs in Saudi Arabia falls into this latter category of countries, where the situation is similar to that reported in Jordan (Amer et al., 2014; Alomoush, 2015) for bottom-up signs.
As far as the signboards of Arabic brands in both the A-E and E-A categories is concerned, all of them conform to the policy by including their brand name in Arabic. None of these signs are displayed exclusively in English. Instead, 17% of them in the first category are exclusively in Arabic, with no English displayed on them at all. If the aim of the policy is to protect Arabic, then the policy has been successful. No shop in the sample examined dared to contravene it. There are issues only as far as the quality of Arabisation is concerned. There are two types of issues: erroneous transliterations and translations giving an unprofessional impression and inconsistent transliterations resulting in a lack of standardisation. In Table two, numbers one, two, three and six are examples of the former, and four, five, seven, eight and nine are examples of the latter case. Notably however, the situation in Saudi Arabia is not as bad as it is in places like Sana’a (Al-Athwary, 2014).

Need for Standardisation and Other Issues

The present study shows that either the sub-landscape of bilingual shop signs has escaped the attention of public language policy-makers in the kingdom, or more likely, their policies have not achieved widespread impact. If the policy-makers want to ensure this landscape is managed well by ensuring greater consistency and standardisation, and ready for the Saudi 2030 Vision, which Al Zumor’s (2019) findings suggest would be true, the issues highlighted in the present study would have to be addressed. The examples of Grill & Chill, Terranova and Velton show that shops face an issue when they need to transliterate to or from Arabic where the letters with equivalent sounds are not present in Arabic. The first and third of the aforementioned shops substituted using the nearest equivalents, but these resulted in unsatisfactory transliterations, and Terranova adopted a different approach by using a non-standard Arabic letter from a variant alphabet based on the Arabic script. Although this resulted in a correct rendering of the sound, the letter is not widely recognised in the region. This highlights a situation where the linguistic landscape could benefit from standardisation. It is not known which of the two approaches is more common, but based on the small selected sample, substitution by the nearest equivalent is more popular, which raises a quality or discrepancy issue. Policy-makers may like to consider this carefully.

Remedial Suggestions

Either the policy-makers should enforce the practice of using the nearest equivalent letter from the existing standard Arabic alphabet, at the risk of creating this quality issue, or they should allow using non-standard letters for greater accuracy, but at the risk of causing confusion due to lack of widespread recognition. In the latter case, there would need to be an accompanying drive to promote recognition of the additional letters. In the long-term, this could lead to their formal inclusion in the Arabic alphabet itself, although if this were ever to happen, this major change would have repercussions and would be opposed by language purists. Given that a similar situation has been reported in Oman (Jamoussi et al., 2017), there is scope for further investigation into how it is being dealt with, thereby favouring transcription over transliteration to indicate correct pronunciation. The recent designation of <ظ> for the sound /g/ by the ALVA could help to pronounce the English words containing this letter correctly without replacing or substituting the English sounds in them with other nearest equivalents in Arabic. It thus satisfies a vital need to prevent mispronunciation. The study has shown that designations for the sounds /p/, /v/ and /ʃ/ should also be considered for adding as new Arabic sounds for the sake of facilitating pronunciation closer to the original in English.
Conclusion

The linguistic landscape of 184 shop signs were examined in shopping malls in two urban areas of Riyadh and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia in view of the Saudi public policy governing signboards. They were all bottom-up signs because they were designed and erected by individual shop owners. After categorising them into A-E signs, E-A of Arab brands and E-A of English brands and excluding the latter to which the policy does not apply, 68 of the signs were then subjected to further analysis to describe their lettering in terms of relative size and information, and the quality of transliteration or translation. The study sought to ascertain the linguistic state of bilingual shop signs under the current language policy that seeks to ensure proper Arabisation

Limitations and Research Recommendations

The study was not conducted outside major cities, so differences with rural areas or areas where non-natives predominate were not ascertained. It may be that monolingual signs exclusively in Arabic are more common in the second, and signs including languages other than Arabic and English in the third. The issue that emerged in the data resulting in a lack of standardisation in transliterating is also worth exploring further from a larger sample to see which is more or less common. This would be necessary before an informed decision on which approach to promote. The Ministry of Trade may consider implementing legislation for the language used in shop signs to be more tightly controlled, and for their owners to seek approval from an authenticated translation office where Anglicisation for Arabic words, or Arabisation of English words, would not differ significantly, and would thus convey the pronunciation and meaning in both languages effectively.

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Linguistic Landscape of Bilingual Shop Signs in Saudi Arabia


Appendices

Appendix A

Analysis of the Selected Shortlisted Signs

Table 3: Analysis of shop signs of Arab local brands in the A-E category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name on Signboard</th>
<th>Type of Shop</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Size &amp; Information</th>
<th>Quality (non-monolingual signs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ln</td>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Abdul Samad Al-Quarshi</td>
<td>perfumery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Adawliyah</td>
<td>electronic appliances</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Al-Alamyah</td>
<td>electronic appliances</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Aldaham Watches</td>
<td>watches</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Al Ghazali</td>
<td>watches</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop Name</td>
<td>Product Type</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alhomaidhi</td>
<td>watches</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alrifai</td>
<td>dry fruits / herbalist</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Shalawi</td>
<td>jewellery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alshaya</td>
<td>watches</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>Alyashmac</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>Arabian Oud</td>
<td>perfumery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baby Fatih</td>
<td>baby jewellery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bannotti</td>
<td>lady’s accessories</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barakat Optical</td>
<td>optical store</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassem Al Qassem</td>
<td>perfumery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedoon Essm</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilaye Phone</td>
<td>mobile phones</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bukanaan</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cho</td>
<td>cafe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee and Crispy</td>
<td>coffee shop</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>Dakayek Express</td>
<td>mobile devices</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damas</td>
<td>jewellery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danat</td>
<td>jewellery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>Dorar</td>
<td>jewellery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>beauty products</td>
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<td>AE</td>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Sign of casher</td>
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<td>AE</td>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>La Creperie</td>
<td>bakery</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lamar Castle</td>
<td>perfumery</td>
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<td>AE</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMA</td>
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<td>MSAC</td>
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<td>Magrabi</td>
<td>eyewear</td>
<td>B AE S S</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Mahyaar</td>
<td>men's clothing</td>
<td>M A - - -</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Majuhuraat Almuhyasan</td>
<td>jewellery</td>
<td>M A - - -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Marahil Alamumah</td>
<td>clothing (maternity)</td>
<td>M A - - -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Mikyajy</td>
<td>cosmetics</td>
<td>B AE S S C</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>Mobily</td>
<td>mobile phones</td>
<td>B AE S S C</td>
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<td>Nawadir Alsaful</td>
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<td>Nawadir Alzamrud</td>
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<td>Nayomi</td>
<td>lady's clothing</td>
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<td>Rina</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B AE E A C</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Shaden</td>
<td>watches/sunglasses</td>
<td>B AE S E C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>She</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B AE S S - C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Suliman Al-Othaim</td>
<td>jewellery</td>
<td>B AE A E C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>Sun and Sand Sports</td>
<td>sports</td>
<td>B AE S S - C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Swiss Corner</td>
<td>watches</td>
<td>B AE S S - C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Tair Al-Layl</td>
<td>abaya clothing</td>
<td>B AE A A - C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Tawuniyah</td>
<td>insurance</td>
<td>B AE S A C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Twaila</td>
<td>abaya clothing</td>
<td>B AE S A C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Wahat Aljalabiya</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B AE S S C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Zain</td>
<td>mobile phones</td>
<td>B AE S S C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

- B=45
- E=0
- S=36
- T=0
- O=0
- AE=45
- E=2
- S=35
- N=2
- A=9
- A=7
- C=27
- C=16
Table 4. Analysis of shop signs of Arab brands in the E-A category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name on Signboard</th>
<th>Type of Shop</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Size &amp; Information</th>
<th>Quality (non-monolingual signs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ln</td>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>S I Tlit Tlat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Balabala</td>
<td>children’s clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>E S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>BCBG Maxazaria</td>
<td>lady’s clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Boboli</td>
<td>lady’s clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Dadak</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>educational institute</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Etam</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Grill &amp; Chill</td>
<td>fast food</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>IKKS</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Mobily</td>
<td>mobile phones</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Montania</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Socks Collection</td>
<td>socks</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Soo Be</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Terranova</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Toms</td>
<td>apparel</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Tours</td>
<td>suitcases/travel goods</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Velton</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>S S C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- TOTALS

M=0 A=0 A=0 A=0 C=16 C=1
B=17 E=0 E=1 E=0 N=0 N=0
T=0 AE=17 S=17 E=0 O=0
Teachers’ Experience in E-assessment: Case Study of EFL Teachers in Algerian Universities

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Abstract
In the wake of the Corona Virus pandemic, many universities have rapidly shifted to remote education. In this regard, students are enrolled in online learning instead of, or sometimes along with, physical classroom presence. As a result, the online assessment also appeared as an alternative method to assess students. The current research paper aims to provide an in-depth look at the online reviews in EFL teaching and learning in the Algerian context during the Covid-19 pandemic. The main questions that set the study are: How do Algerian English language teachers perceive e-assessment via Moodle? What impact did the online reviews have on assessment practices?; How did an online assessment affect students’ achievements? To answer these questions, the researcher conducted a study with Algerian EFL teachers and students from three Universities. The researcher collected data through a questionnaire addressed to EFL teachers and a comparative analysis of Project-Based Language essays done by the students in face-to-face assessment and online assessment. The findings revealed that although the challenges facing teachers in online review, positive attitudes appeared towards this method. The analysis also demonstrated that the assessment practice used mainly by participated teachers is a summative assessment. The results also showed a big difference in students’ achievements between face-to-face assignments and online evaluation, in favor of e-assessment.

Keywords: Algerian universities, COVID-19, EFL teachers, e-learning, e-assessment, online education, teachers’ perception

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Introduction

By the introduction of ‘E,’ the pace of change has picked up. From signal processing to control and communications, the internet revolutionized the world to the extent that it is now our preferred medium of everyday communication. Technology has impacted almost every aspect of life today, and absolutely, education is no exception. This new medium is now sweeping through schools and classrooms, profoundly changing the process. Thanks to the advancement of technology, online learning is currently a part of many institutions' course offerings worldwide, especially in higher education. In this regard, students receive online learning instead or sometimes with physical classroom presence. This situation became more expansive due to Corona Virus lockdowns worldwide. Following the outbreak of the virus (Covid 19), universities canceled face-to-face classes, closed the doors to campuses across the globe and switched to online learning. Thus, encouraging students to return home and complete their studies prevents contamination.

The rationale aims for undertaking such a study is to investigate EFL teachers’ perceptions towards e-assessment; the different practices of online assessment used, in addition to its impact on students’ achievements. The significance of this study is to provide an overview of the process of e-assessment in higher education. It has been reported that e-assessment is rarely used in Algerian universities. As such, this study will look at the reasons behind this hesitation. Following the outbreak of the Corona Virus, Algerian universities shifted to distance learning through Moodle website. Students receive lectures weekly, and teachers are required to evaluate their student’s knowledge perception. Thus, assessment is taking place. However, the current review is no longer the same. Due to the tough times posed by the virus, physical-based classroom presence assessment is canceled. On the other hand, online evaluation appeared, causing more challenges to EFL teachers. Therefore, this study prompts for the following research questions:

▪ How do Algerian English language teachers perceive e-assessment via Moodle?
▪ What impact did online review have on assessment practices?
▪ How did online assessment affect students ‘achievements?’

The objective of the above research questions is to bring forth the actual exploitation of MOODLE to assess EFL students virtually. As such, EFL teachers’ attitudes will be revealed; the different types of online assessment will be investigated, and the impact of e-assessment on students’ achievement will be scrutinized.

Literature Review

Academic Assessment: An Overview

After completing a lecture, students enroll in special tests to evaluate their knowledge perception. This kind of knowledge perception evaluation is called ‘assessment.’ Assessment plays a vital role in every pedagogical program. It is the process of using evidence to understand and improve student learning in academic programs. Its primary focus is to answer the following question: did students learn what they should have upon completing a program?

In this context, Webber (2012) claimed that assessment refers to “activities designed primarily to foster student learning” (p. 202). In general, these activities, by the end, will report some understanding of students’ achievements and progress toward desired learning outcomes.
Furthermore, Brown (1990) referred to assessment as a related series of measures used to determine a complex attribute of an individual or group of individuals. In this sense, the teacher draws his conclusion to interpret the level of learning attainment. Next in importance, Goubeaud and Yan (2004) defined assessment as the process of collecting information about a student to aid in decision-making about the progress and language development of the student. In this respect, the assessment does not only evaluate students’ achievements but diagnostic the gaps in student learning, (Lee, 2015). Based on this assumption, the instructors adjust the curriculum to meet the learners’ needs. As a result, teachers monitor the quality of education and the learning process.

In education, the teaching-learning process requires teachers to base instructional, grading and reporting decisions on knowledge of student attainment and progress toward desired learning outcomes (Wilson and Adams 1996). For this reason, both assessment and evaluation may be treated as synonyms or as distinctly different concepts. Assessment is concerned with converting expectations to results. On the other hand, evaluation is concerned with the interpretation of assessment results that describes the worth or merit of a student’s performance about a set of learner expectations or standards of performance. As a result, it deals with validity, accuracy, and reliability (Yambi, 2018).

**Types of Assessment:**

Assessment is essential in the educational process to fulfill the mission of teaching and learning. According to Klint (2020), through assessment, teachers usually try to answer the following questions:

- What do students know? What do they not yet understand?
- Where are students struggling? Why?
- What should the instructor teach next? What should they adjust in future lessons?
- Which students need an intervention? Which intervention matches the need?
- Does retained learning meet district and state expectations?
- Does our curriculum have gaps between learning expectations and assessment?

For the sake to answer these questions, four types of assessment appeared in the classroom:

**Diagostic Assessment:** this is a pre-lecture evaluation used to reveal students’ strengths and weaknesses. Instructors recommend the use of this type at the beginning of each class, unit, or chapter since it allows the teacher to discover the academic student’s level of the previous section to successfully move to the next one, Lee (2015).

**Formative Assessment:** is an in-process evaluation used to instantly test students’ comprehension and perception of the lesson, unit, or course to identify their weaknesses during a particular lecture. Black and William (2010) defined formative assessment as: “activities undertaken by teachers— and by their students in assessing themselves— that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities” (p. 82). So, in this type of assessment, the teacher collects detailed information to improve and adjust the lesson to meet the students’ needs.

**Summative Assessment:** unlike to formative assessment, a summative is an ending process used to evaluate students by the end of the semester or the year, such as graded final exams or tests.
According to Black and William (2010), this type attempts to capture the culmination of students’ achievements within a specified time frame.

**Interim Assessment:** this is similar to the formative assessment. It is an in-lecture evaluation to check students’ grasp of the lesson content to successfully to the next level. This type is used between lessons or units to test the student’s knowledge change through time, (Tomlinson, 2000).

**Online Assessment**

In online education, an online assessment or e-assessment is sometimes used as an online method to evaluate students’ attainment of information provided in online teaching. This method usually refers to online ability tests completed at home or in a controlled environment. Moreover, the principle of e-assessment lies beyond measuring what the students know, and it also focuses on how they learn. As a result, schools, colleges, and universities need to implement relevant technologies for assessments to make learning applicable to modern students, who are more digital and competence-based. Gursula and Keserh (2009) define this process as educational technology, which is, according to them, more accessible to today’s students than face-to-face education.

When discussing the advantages of the e-assessment, this type of evaluation is more beneficial because it does not require much time as in the traditional method. At the same time, the assessed students can take the assessment during class or at home using their own devices. This new version of assessment gave the teacher instant accessibility to see their results and answers and provide instant feedback. However, technology is not always reliable. Especially in developing countries such as Algeria. Where, connection or internet problems are heavily reported. Moreover, most teachers said that one of the prominent disadvantages of e-assessment is that teachers are unsure who is behind the screen. Thus, virtual evaluation is a good place for students cheat, Elizondo-Montemayor (2004).

**E-assessment in Algeria: a Covid-19 Obligation**

Due to the unprecedented COVID-19 incident, higher education institutions have faced different challenges in their teaching-learning activities. Online education has been the most effective device for student retention and maintaining access to learning. Consequently, the ministry of higher education in Algeria hurried to apply the new tool during the era of Covid 19 to catch up with teaching and learning processes. Most of the Algerian universities did not engage in online teaching and learning before that period. As a result, online education is coined with the Covid-19 Virus. Bin Herzallah, (2021) argued: “The virtual setting of education has not really been applied until the spread of the virus” (p. 78). Therefore, and as a response to the Algerian ministry’s call for carrying on studies, ‘Moodle’ has been used to meet the new variety of teaching and learning processes. This sudden shift to online teaching faced high education teachers with an array of challenges they had not experienced before. Notably, teachers experienced many challenges in assessing students virtually. In others, online assessment is not practiced, (Boubekeur, 2021).
Methods

As mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to determine high education teachers’ views about e-assessment, areas of online assessment practices used, and whether e-assessment reveals the same results as classroom assessment. To achieve these objectives, quantitative and qualitative method is used.

Participants

The research sample consists of 13 randomly selected EFL teachers from Algerian universities, namely, Oran University, Saida University, and Tlemcen University. The participants reported that they had already assessed students through Moodle more than three times. They provided the researcher with the questions used in the assessment process. They also provided electronic copies of the marks obtained by the same students before and after the Corona Virus in these essays. All corpus has been received by email. The aim and procedure of the study was clarified to the participating teachers, and their consent were obtained. All data have been received by email.

Research Instruments

To answer the research questions, an electronic structured questionnaire was addressed to 13 EFL teachers from three Algerian Universities. The overarching purpose of employing the questionnaire is that, this instrument proved its utility in collecting sufficient data in a short period about teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards different types of teaching and learning assessment, (Webber, 2012).

A comparative analysis was used to compare the mean Project-Based Language marks during face-to-face and online assessments. The researcher believed that using this comparative method would reveal the reality of the evaluation in Algerian Universities. In other words, most teachers are against e-assessment because they think that most students in virtual evaluation base their answers on cheating.

Data Collection and Procedures

The questionnaire was divided into three structures: in the first one, several factual questions had been used to elicit demographic information (age, gender, academic subject, and the number of e-assessments completed). This information would enable analysis by a group. In the second structure, the respondents received a series of closed questions. The answers to the questions formed the central part of the research data. In the third structure, a comment box was included at the end to allow for open-ended responses and, or suggestions.

The questionnaire was delivered online for many reasons: the research is about online assessment, so it was an opportunity to use the same software to provide the questionnaire; in addition, there are numerous benefits to online delivery in terms of cost, time, ease of administration, data collation and analysis (Dillman, 2007), and of course due to the pandemic. Frequency and Percentage Distribution Analyses are used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire.

After that, the researcher analyzed the students ‘marks of the same PBL essays done in two different means. The first mean was a face-to-face control, and the second mean was an online
control. In this regard, Arithmetical averages are used to see the differences between PBL essays marks in the face-to-face assessment and online assessment.

Results
Analysis of Teachers’ Questionnaire
Phase 1: Demographic Information Analysis
The sample contained (eight M-61.53%) males and (five F-38.46%) females, aged from 32 to 67 years. Through these age differences, the investigator wanted to know the use of e-assessment in all age categories. Hence the results showed that online assessment is used chiefly by teachers under 45 years old. The other category is not convinced by this type of evaluation, and they still prefer classroom-based presence assessment.

All respondents are EFL teachers (four teaching Literature and Civilization/nine teaching Linguistics and Didactics). Based on this assumption, it was found that teachers of linguistics and didactics used online assessment more than teachers of Literature and Civilization.

All participants used e-assessment more than five times in the two previous years to evaluate their students’ perceptions. Thus, the study is based on reliable data where e-assessment was used frequently.

Phase Two: Analysis of Questions
Question 1: Do you evaluate students after each lesson?
Table 1. Teachers’ evaluation strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>69.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>30.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that the overwhelming number of teachers; that is, around nine (09-69.23%) out of thirteen (13-100%) claimed that they evaluate students just after each lecture, as opposed to four (04-30.76%) informants who reported that they do not. According to them, they select the most important courses, and evaluate them.

Question 2: When evaluating students, are you adopting:
Table 2. Teachers’ evaluation method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-assessment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom evaluation</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that, around eleven (11-84.61%), reported that they use online assessment in evaluating students. Two participants (15.38%) out of thirteen (13-100%) stated that they still use classroom evaluation.

Question 3: What e-assessment practices do you use mostly?
Table 3. Assessment types used by teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic Assessment</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative Assessment</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>61.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim Assessment</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative Assessment</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>30.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked about the e-assessment practices they use the most, eight (08-61.53%) of the respondents said they use formative assessment, four (04-30.76%) of subjects use summative e-assessment, while the remaining respondent (01-7.69%) uses diagnostic e-assessment. Surprisingly, no teacher uses interim e-assessment.

Question 4. What type of questions do you use in your e-assessment?

Figure 1. The type of questions used in the e-assessment by EFL teachers

The graph above demonstrates that 61.53% of teachers claimed that they use direct questions in e-assessment. Only five teachers (38.46%) out of thirteen, reported that they use project-based questions.

Question 5: What challenges do you face in creating and deploying assessments for your online courses?

Table 4. Challenges facing EFL teachers in EFL assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet access or connectivity</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low students’ response</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>61.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing the reliability of the test</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>69.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As depicted in Table 4, a follow-up analysis about the challenges of e-assessment revealed that all respondents (13-100%) see that internet access and connectivity is the major problem, both teachers and learners are suffering from. Ten (10- 76.92%) teachers claimed that cheating is also another problem in e-assessment. Nine teachers (69.23%) considered the e-test incredible. At the same time, eight (08-61.53%) teachers reported that low students’ response to distance evaluation is another challenge.

Question 6: According to you, is e-assessment considered a valid, practical, secure, and reliable alternative to traditional paper-based assessment?
Figure 2. Teachers’ attitudes towards the reliability of e-assessment

The figure above reveals that 84.61% of the questioned teachers claimed that they consider e-assessment as a valid, practical, secure and reliable alternative to traditional paper-based assessment. On the other hand, only 15.38% of the informants presume that online assessment is a poorer method, and can never be an alternative to traditional paper-based assessment.

Question 7: Did you Use E-assessment before Coronavirus?

Table 5. *E-assessment usage before Corona virus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that all of the questioned informants, (13-100%) reported that they never used online assessment in evaluating students before the outbreak of the Coronavirus. Thereby, none of them (0-0%) replied ‘yes’.

**Analysis of Students PBL Essays in Traditional and Online Assessment**

*Comparing the Mean PBL Essays Marks of the Students*

Table 6. *Comparison between students’ achievement in the face to face assessment and online assessment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBL Essays</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Paired t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face Asse</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Asse</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table demonstrates the following:
- In the face to face assessment, the results of the paired t-test indicated that there is a significant medium difference between (-10, M=152, SD=0) and (+10, M=112, SD=0), t (0)= infinity, p < .001.
- In online assessment, the results of the paired t-test indicated that there is a significant medium difference (-10, M=67, SD=0) and (+10, M=197, SD=0), t (0)=infinity p < 0.001.
- Thus, the difference between the scores obtained in the two periods under-average is marked. In this regard the paired t-test indicated that there is a significant medium difference between the under-average marks in face-to-face (M=152, SD=0) and online assessment (M=67, SD=0), t(0)= -infinity, p <0.001.
- Also, the difference between the scores obtained in the two periods above-average is marked. In this regard, the paired t-test indicated that there is a significant medium difference between the above-average marks in the face-to-face assessment (M=112, SD=0) and online assessment (M=197, SD=0), t(0)=infinity, p<0.001.
- As a result, what is reported by the above table shows a great difference in students’ achievement between the face-to-face assessment and online assessment, in favor of online assessment.

Discussion
The study aims to investigate EFL teachers’ attitudes and perceptions towards e-assessment in evaluating their students. The findings above have answered the two questions set out to steer the direction of this study.

In question one, the majority of the informants asserted that they evaluate students after each lecture. On the other hand, only four teachers claimed that they choose only the most essential lessons in the syllabus, and assess students in it. In fact, due to Covid, it is worth mentioning that the teaching and learning processes and schedules are changed in Algerian Universities, (Boubekeur, 2021). The semester is scheduled in no more than seven weeks, with sometimes more than ten lectures should be delivered in that period. As a result, most of them focus only on explaining the courses. By this, teachers do not provide much time for assessment. When, the semester is completed, most of them do tests to evaluate their students. This fact that explains the absence of frequent review.

When asked about the type of the assessment- e-assessment or classroom assessment-, 84.61% of participants claimed that they use distance assessment. Due to Coronavirus, all
universities and high schools shifted to online teaching. As a result, online assessment is taking place. However, only 15.84% of EFL teachers still use classroom evaluation. Discussing the results regarding the demographic information of participants, those respondents who are not using e-assessment are aged more than 60 years old. Thus, aged teachers are not well-formed in using internet websites, and still prefer the use of traditional methods in teaching. These results agree with Gursula and Keserb (2009), who argue that in education, technology is mainly used by youngsters.

Talking about the e-assessment practices used by participants, most of them use formative assessment, and four teachers use summative e-assessment. This result supports the first question’s findings where nine teachers reported that they evaluate students after each lecture, while the remaining claimed that they do not. On the other hand, only one respondent uses diagnostic e-assessment. The absence of this type of evaluation can be explained based on (Lee, 2015)’s claims, who recommend the use of diagnostic assessment in the classroom rather than online learning. Surprisingly, no teacher uses interim e-assessment. Interim assessments are presumed to provide teachers with valuable information about changes in students’ knowledge and understanding of the material throughout the school year. In addition, interim evaluation leads to constructive feedback and differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2000). Unfortunately, according to the participants, this is not the case in the online assessment, where they claimed that they are not sure who is behind the screen. Thus, interim assessment is not a suitable method in the online evaluation.

The results also revealed that the teachers encountered challenges when assessing students online. Among are, internet accessibility, and poor connectivity. Moreover, most teachers consider cheating as one of the crucial challenges, they face. All teachers claimed that students cheat in the classroom, so they will not miss the opportunity when they are online. Furthermore, the participants agree on the quality of online tests. Because according to them, it is an excellent chance for students to cheat. The other challenge was about the inadequate response of students to the online evaluation. This supports the first challenge claimed by participants about the poor connectivity.

Next in importance, the results indicate more substantial positive feelings than negative ones of the e-assessment. Of course, this agrees with the previous findings about the use of e-assessment among teachers. It was found that aged teachers still preferred the traditional assessment because they do not trust online evaluation.

As hypothesized before, all teachers reported that they did not use e-assessment before the outbreak of the Corona Virus. This finding is supported by a survey done by Bin Herzallah (2021), who claimed that through the use of the internet, Algerians discovered the fragility of the systems, which hinders them from keeping pace with the developments of the digital age. In this regard, “the distance educational system” remains confined to its traditional scope (printed lessons sent to the participants by regular mail). As a result, the online assessment was excluded from teaching practices until the outbreak of Covid 19, which poses the shifting mode of e-learning.
Finally, comparing students’ results between the face-to-face assessment, the online assessment. The high achievements can be explained by the availability of courses in Moodle. And the students’ easiest access to this platform, Gursula and Keserb (2009). However, teachers had another answer, which is that the students through project-based learning online assignments find much more time to cheat. These findings are consistent with those of Elizondo-Montemayor (2004).

Conclusion

Because there is a need to assess the learning outcomes achieved through online education, e-assessment is often challenging for EFL teachers. This paper aimed to provide an in-depth look at assessment in EFL teaching and learning in the Algerian context during the Covid-19 pandemic. It tried to investigate different teachers’ attitudes and perceptions towards online assessment. On this basis, the results revealed that, despite the various challenges have been tackled in this study; positive feelings are more vital than the negative feelings towards e-assessment in EFL teachers of Algerian universities. Moreover, summative assignments are the most used online by EFL teachers. Finally, higher achievement level was detected by students in online assessment when compared to face-to-face assessment.

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References


Cothematic Intertextuality in a Sociocognitive Discourse-Analytical Perspective

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Abstract

The present study seeks to revisit the concept of intertextuality as integrated into a sociocognitive discourse-analytical perspective, whereby intertextual meanings can be explicated via semantic macropropositions, mental representations, event models, and pragmatic context models. The study’s significance derives from its scholarly endeavour to demonstrate how the semantic and rhetorical meanings of intertextuality are cognitively explicable in relation to their relevant macro social/societal structures in McGrath and McGrath’s (2007) *The Dawkins Delusion?* as a polemical response to Richard Dawkins’ (2006) *The God Delusion*. Three research questions have been posed: (1) What are the cothematic intertextual links that globally constitute the discourse(s) drawn upon in *The Dawkins Delusion*? (2) How to explain the intertextual local meanings constructed and generated by their relevant event models in the same book? (3) What are the context model’s constraints that control the production and reception of the intertextual local meanings and relate them to macro social/societal structures? Methodologically, the study subjects Thibault’s (1991) notion of “cothematic intertextuality” to the sociocognitive approach presented in critical discourse studies. The data analysis has demonstrated how the global and local intertextual meanings holding between two sets of textbook data have been cognitively mediated and related to significant social/societal macrostructures.

Keywords: Context model, cothematic intertextuality, critical discourse studies, event models, macropropositions, sociocognitive approach

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Introduction

The concept of intertextuality is credited to Julia Kristeva’s two seminal premises: (i) any text is constructed out of a quotation mosaic and (ii) any text serves to absorb and transform another (Kristeva, 1986). Kristeva’s premises constitute the first systematic theory of intertextuality, with her attempt to synergize Saussurean and Bakhtinian theories of language and literature, respectively (Allen, 2000). But, here, Kristeva seemed to be more concerned with Bakhtin’s (1981) significant notion of “social heteroglossia” as the language’s potential to contain many voices that materialize at utterance/text level, and hence the dialogicity inherent in language(s). Crucial about Bakhtin’s social heteroglossia is the potential for exemplifying language’s intertextual (or dialogic) nature which unfailingly materializes by serving two speakers in a single utterance.

Notwithstanding a plethora of research on intertextuality (see below), to date the concept of intertextuality has not been examined through the lens of van Dijk’s (2008, 2009a, 2009b) sociocognitive approach in a way that projects the concept as a practice with cognitive relevance to the macrostructures of social/societal representations. The current study derives its significance from its being a demonstration of how the semantic and rhetorical meanings of intertextuality are cognitively explicable based on their relevant macro social/societal structures in McGrath and McGrath’s (2007) *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* as a polemical response to Richard Dawkins’ (2006) *The God Delusion*.

Towards capturing the current research significance, three related research questions are put forward: (1) What are the cothematic intertextual links that globally constitute the discourse(s) drawn upon in *The Dawkins Delusion*? (2) How to explain the intertextual local meanings constructed and generated by their relevant event models in the same book? (3) What are the context model’s constraints that control the production and reception of the intertextual local meanings and relate them to macro social/societal structures? On addressing these questions, the following hypothesis may be (dis-)proven: 

**Tackling intertextuality in a sociocognitive discourse-analytical perspective may demonstrate how the cognitive aspects of text producers and recipients (e.g., mental representations, event models, and context models) can probe the interface between the micro semantic and rhetorical (local) meanings of intertextuality and their relevant macro social and societal structures (e.g., individual social actors and situated interactions as well as groups and institutions, power relations, and educational practices).**

The remainder of the current study unfolds in six sections. Section two surveys the relevant review of literature. Section three outlines the theoretical framework adopted in the present study. Section four offers the study’s methodology. Section five presents the data analysis. Section six is a discussion of the main findings. Section seven concludes the present study with an overall summary of the research point and its originality.

Literature Review

Following the Bakhtinian influence of social heteroglossia and dialogicity (Bakhtin, 1981), most of the research conducted on intertextuality from a discourse-analytical perspective has been concerned with probing the interface between the intertextual and the social, but with scant heed to cognition; this may boil down to the inaccurate commonplace assumption that the relationship between language/discourse and society is straightforward. This is especially so among the (critical) discourse analysts and theorists who advocate the sociologically oriented

One classic study on intertextuality was conducted by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), who presented the notion as falling among the seven standards of textuality. Adopting a procedural approach, the two authors focused on factors constituting the interdependencies between the production and reception of a text, depending on the participants’ knowledge of other previously encountered texts. The study recognized the utility of the concept of knowledge mediation and its role in securing the temporal processing between the use of one text and the use of a prior one. Reproducing a similar recognition, Giuffrè (2017) used the same procedural approach to demonstrate the intertextual workings across different text types, literary, scientific, and conversational.

Investigating intertextuality within the ambit of critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been influenced by the general scope of CDA itself as being distinctive in its view of the link between language and society as well as the relationship between analysis and the practices analysed (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Obviously, the critical approach of CDA was then focused on the language-society relationship that presupposed the conspicuous absence of the cognitive component mediating both micro-linguistic structure and macro-social structure – perhaps except for van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach (see below).

In a bid to bridge the gap between CDA and language cognition, O’Halloran (2003) paid particular attention to the interpretation stage of CDA. But O’Halloran has been limited to the traditional field of cognitive linguistics, especially in relation to the psycholinguistic evidence for inference generation, ideal-reader construction, and relevance theory; further, his investigation has been confined to how news textual data could mystify what is reported. Indeed, this dimension of cognitive linguistics to CDA has not been applied to explaining intertextuality in the scope of CDA.

Although the frameworks of text linguistics and CDA have contributed to the study of intertextuality, they both cannot be considered to have investigated intertextual meanings on the sociocognitive grounds of discourse, particularly at the level of ideological representations and societal structures. The theoretical framework presented in the coming section is an endeavour to bridge such a gap in the literature on intertextuality.

**Theoretical Framework**

Before explaining how intertextuality can be integrated into van Dijk’s sociocognitive discourse-analytical approach, one needs to present significant aspects of intertextuality. Indeed, one finds Thibault’s (1991) notion of “cothematic intertextuality” fitting the present theoretical framework. The rationale for this is twofold. First, generally, Thibault’s notion departs from the classic “isomorphic or one-to-one fit between text and discourse” (Thibault, 1991, p. 120); second, in tackling this notion, Thibault has emphasized the ideological component of the social agents enacting intertextual meanings and their heteroglossic nature. Therefore, Thibault’s “cothematic intertextuality” can be analysed in a sociocognitive perspective.
In what follows, the first subsection elucidates Thibault’s conceptualization of intertextuality as being “cothematic,” and the second outlines how such conceptualization can be integrated into van Dijk’s (2008, 2009a, 2009b) sociocognitive approach.

**Cothematic Intertextuality**

Drawing on Vološinov (1973) and Bakhtin (1981), Thibault (1991) explicates the concept of intertextuality by probing the text-discourse heteroglossic relations:

A particular text is […] the material site of a plurality of heteroglossically related social discourses and their voicings. Specific texts, therefore, both instantiate and realize the heteroglossic relations of alliance, conflict, opposition, and co-optation among discursive positioned-practices in the social formation. (Thibault, 1991, p. 120)

Further, Thibault posits the caveat that intertextuality should not be viewed as positivistically recoverable from “antecedent source texts”; but, rather, there should be a distinction between what Frow (1986) describes as “weak” and “strong” forms of intertextuality; that is, between “thematic allusion on the one hand and an explicit, extended, verbally and structurally close reference on the other” (Frow, 1986, p. 156, cited in Thibault, 1991, p. 135).

This may explain why Thibault, in developing his theory of intertextuality, has adapted Lemke’s (1990) topically oriented notion of “thematic formation,” which is formed out of “[t]he web of semantic relationships among different thematic items”; and, as the former explains, a thematic item is that element of a “thematic pattern” which can be expressed across all different texts and genres. Thibault (1991) managed to develop a critical model that explains intertextual links as being “cothematic”; that is, two or more texts are presumed to share “lexico-semantic and ideational-grammatical meaning relations from the lexico-grammatical resources of language” (p. 136). Thus, intertextual thematic meaning can be construed on the basis of “typical patterns of combination and co-occurrence” of such lexico-grammatical resources enacted by what Lemke (1995) describes as “social agents.” At this point, there seems to be an ideological component of the “social agents” enacting the kind of meanings and practices realized in the heteroglossic social discourses in one text or another.

Here, subjective in nature, this ideological component of social agents can be explained in cognitive terms; or, more specifically, the agents’ mental representations, event models, and pragmatic context models as models of subjective representations of the relevant linguistic patterns that construe Thibault’s intertextuality – hence the methodological potential for investigating intertextuality from a sociocognitive discourse-analytical perspective.

**The Sociocognitive Discourse-Analytical Approach to Intertextuality**

The value of cognition for interpreting discursive and societal structures can be recognized in van Dijk’s (2014) account of how the sociocognitive approach contributes to the field of CDS:

A socio-cognitive theory assumes that social structures need to be interpreted and represented cognitively and that such mental representations affect the cognitive processes involved in the production and interpretation of discourse. The same principle holds true for the reverse relationship, namely how discourse is able to affect social structure – namely through the mental representations of language users as social actors. (p. 122)
According to this approach, then, discursive structures—including (inter)textual structure—and societal structures should be cognitively mediated. Towards this end, van Dijk heeds cognitive-structure aspects, namely, macropropositions, mental representations, event models, and context models.

In his sociocognitive approach, van Dijk explains the notion of context and its multidisciplinary complexity (van Dijk, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). To van Dijk (2008), context is not a form of “objective condition”; rather, it is an (inter)subjective construct “designed and ongoingly updated in interaction by participants as members of groups and communities” (p. x). Therefore, van Dijk considers the psychological concept of “mental models,” which “subjectively represent or construct situations, both those we talk about as well as those in which we talk” (Van Dijk, 2009a, p. 6, emphasis in original). However, mental models of specific events “are not entirely personal”; rather, they also have “important social, intersubjective dimensions” due to the socialization of language users who have acquired “various kinds of shared knowledge and other beliefs” (Van Dijk, 2009a, p. 6, italics in original).

The concept of “mental models” has been utilized by van Dijk (2009b) in explaining “pragmatic context models” and their close bearings on discourse as being “specific mental models of subjective representations (definitions) of the relevant properties of communicative situations, controlling discourse processing and adapting discourse to the social environment so that it is situationally appropriate” (Van Dijk, 2009b, p. 65). An essential part of the relevant properties of communicative situations is what van Dijk (2009b, p. 68) technically terms the “semantic macrostructures” of discourse, or “global meanings, topics or themes,” which are “characteristically expressed in titles, abstracts, summaries and announcements” and can be formally recognized as “macropropositions.”

Indeed, such semantic macrostructures, or macropropositions, can be taken as a discursive medium for the realization of Thibault’s (1991) cothematic intertextual links, being construed based on “the typical patterns of combination and co-occurrence of lexico-semantic and ideational-grammatical items” (see above). This is especially so since the local meanings of such typical patterns are crucial to the context of (inter)textual meanings, mainly for two reasons: (i) “local meanings are a function of the selection made by speakers/writers in their mental models of events or their more general knowledge and ideologies”; (ii) “they [local meanings] are the kind of information that […] most directly influences the mental models, and hence the opinions and attitudes of recipients” (Van Dijk, 2009b, p. 69).

Here, it can be argued that explaining the local meanings of the semantic macrostructures can contribute to understanding Lemke’s (1995) “thematic formation” as being “recurrent patterns of semantic relations,” potentially utilized by social agents in representing specific topics in and across texts on a cothetically intertextual level of meanings. These meanings can take two forms. The first form comprises subjective or personal aspects of meaning, in that they reflect the recent event models stored in the short-term episodic memory of language users, who are in turn controlled by the context models adapting cothetically intertextual forms to the communicative purposes of events and/or situations. The second form comprises social and societal aspects of meaning associated, respectively, with (a) the micro social situation in terms of its action and actors with various roles (communicative, social, occupational, political, etc.) and (b) the macro structures of the groups and institutions as well as their socially shared representations and ideologies (see van Dijk, 2008, 2009a, 2009b).
Now, having proposed the sociocognitive discourse-analytical framework of explicating cothematic intertextuality, it is time to outline the methodology adopted in the present study.

**Methodology**

This section is devoted to discussing the research data employed for the analysis of cothematic intertextuality and the methodological procedure followed towards conducting this form of analysis.

**Data**

The present study utilizes two sets of data. The first is the primary set of data, being the target of cothetically intertextual analysis; it is a book written by Alister McGrath and Joanna McGrath: *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*. The book was published in 2007 by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), four chapters, 78 pages. Significantly, the book has been mainly authored by Professor Alister McGrath of Oxford University, as a critical response to the anti-religion arguments marshalled by Professor Richard Dawkins, Oxford University, in his book *The God Delusion*. Hence, this book is taken here as the second set of data. It was published in 2006 by Black Swan, 10 chapters, 463 pages.

It is worth mentioning that, although having two authors, *The Dawkins Delusion?* is written in the first person referring to the main author, Alister McGrath; and, therefore, throughout the analysis below, only the main author is referred to. Perhaps, one more reason why the main author is exclusively focused in the analysis can be ascribed to the fact that it is the main author who is ideologically opposed to Richard Dawkins; this is being so on account of the contextual information related to Alister McGrath himself, as an ex-atheist who later converted to Christianity.

**Procedure**

The methodological procedure followed in the present study proceeded at the three stages typical of the sociocognitive discourse-analytical approach. The first stage addresses the first research question raised in the introduction: What are the cothematic intertextual links that globally constitute the discourse(s) drawn upon in *The Dawkins Delusion*? At this stage, the cothetically intertextual macropropositions were inferred and described throughout the whole book (*The Dawkins Delusion*). These macropropositions have been inferred based on their being the global meanings constituting Alister McGrath’s anti-Dawkins’ discourse as being realized in the book title and chapter titles; therefore, the phrasing of the macropropositions has been conditioned by their being intertextually co-thematic with the main topics in Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*.

The second procedural stage of analysis addresses the second question: How to explain the intertextual local meanings constructed and generated by their relevant event models in the same book? This stage is concerned with the semantic analysis of the local meanings found in McGrath’s *The Dawkins Delusion* as functionally related to the selections consciously made by McGrath – or even by Dawkins as manifestly quoted by McGrath himself – in his mental models of events or his more general knowledge of religion and atheism as well as his ideologies and biases for or against them; thus, McGrath’s intertextual links with Dawkins have been demonstrated to be cognitively mediated through such models of events in a way that can be
correlated with other macro social structures, including the social representations and institutional frameworks associated with both religion and atheism.

The third, and last, stage of analysis addresses the third question: What are the context model’s constraints that control the production and reception of the intertextual local meanings and relate them to relevant macro social/societal structures? This stage tackled the context models pertaining to McGrath and Dawkins, mainly by focusing on the schema-based categories of spatiotemporal settings, situated actions, and participants controlling the production and reception of the (cothetically) intertextual forms of local meanings in *The Dawkins Delusion?*. The current stage has demonstrated how both the discursive meanings of cothetically intertextuality and the macro social structures of social, ideological, and institutional representations can be cognitively mediated by the two polarized context models of religion and atheism.

**Data Analysis**

This is the analysis section where cothetically intertextuality between *The Dawkins Delusion?* and *The God Delusion* is examined at three complementary levels: (i) cothetically intertextual macropropositions, (ii) intertextual forms of local meanings and the relevant event models, and (iii) authorial context models and their constraints on these intertextual forms of local meanings.

**Cothetically Intertextual Macropropositions**

At the level of semantic macrostructures, the whole book of *The Dawkins Delusion?* can be summarized in four macropropositions that are cothetically intertextual with *The God Delusion*:

M1 Dawkins is under the delusion that there is a form of God delusion due to his atheist fundamentalism and denial of the divine.
M2 Dawkins’ delusion consists in his premise that faith is both infantile and irrational.
M3 Science is limited and there is no warfare of science and religion.
M4 Dawkins has got misconceptions about religion.

M1 amounts to the overall macroproposition throughout the whole book, simply because it captures the meaning of its full title: *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*. Obviously, the main title manifests a direct intertextual link to Richard Dawkins’ (2006) *The God Delusion*; and thus Dawkins’ textbook can be reckoned to be the trigger for producing the book under analysis. Whereas this may initially spell out the fact that the intertextual component is guaranteed in this case, the cognitive workings underlying this case of explicit intertextuality warrants an investigation of the former book’s subtitle. The subtitle “Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine” signals the author’s judgmental position with reference to Dawkins’ “atheist fundamentalism” that denies “the divine” in absolute terms. Notice how the negatively connotated term “fundamentalism” reflects Dawkins’ uncritical rejection of all forms of religion. At this point, the author has developed a mental model of attacking Dawkins’ proposal of atheism.

Indeed, the author’s latter mental model is expressed through the rest of the macropropositions above, yet with different events in focus. For example, M2 is more specific in referential scope compared to M1, with the former developing Dawkins’ delusion into the premise that Dawkins asserts that faith be both “infantile” and “irrational” (Chap. 1, pp. 2-6).
McGrath’s intertextual link to Dawkins’ premise marks the author’s critical stance towards the latter’s “favoured dogmas and distortions” about “Christian theology” (p. 6). Thus, the content of M2 reflects the author’s pro-religion mental model of defending Christianity. Moving to M3, the author seems to shift to Dawkins’ mental model of the science-over-religion event. The event has been countered by McGrath’s propositional content about the non-existence of a warfare of science and religion. At this point there emerges a clash of mental event models between the two authors, which sets the scene for intertextuality: whereas Dawkins reiterates the expression “the power of science,” McGrath consistently refers to “the spiritual power of Christianity” and “the power of religious faith.” The latter set of expressions has been introduced in reaction to Dawkins’ former set; and this has created a dialogic effect, which can be viewed as being (i) a trace of the authors’ clashing mental event models of defending Christian belief versus attacking all forms of religion and (ii) an instantiation of the wider-scale opposing ideologies of religion and atheism.

The last macroproposition of M4 presents a topic with the thematic focus of describing Dawkins as having “misconceptions” about religion. Thus, M4 seems to be a specification of M3, with the former emphasizing religion as misconstrued by Dawkins. This macroproposition summarizes Chapter three in McGrath’s book, titled “What Are the Origins of Religion?”. Of course the whole chapter forms an intertextual link that is cothematic with Chapter five in Dawkins’ book, titled “The Roots of Religion.” It can be assumed here that both chapters count as an intertextual syntagm, which strongly features the same clashing mental event models of both authors – defending Christian belief versus attacking all forms of religion – in a way that underscores the cognitive dissonance holding between the two authors.

Thus, at the macropropositional level, the cothematic intertextuality holding between The Dawkins Delusion? and The God Delusion seems to be predicated on a clash of mental event models between the two authors, namely, defending Christian belief versus attacking all forms of religion. The coming subsection focuses on the semantic and rhetorical local meanings, subsumed under the four macropropositions identified above, and their mental model of events.

**Intertextual Local Meanings and their Event Models**

At the local semantic-rhetorical level of McGrath’s introduction to The Dawkins Delusion?, one may examine the author’s micro forms of intertextuality with The God Delusion. In the introduction, there are four such intertextuality forms: relexicalization, rhetorical contrast, and presupposition.

Relexicalization is encountered in the two expressions of “Dawkins” in the main title and “atheist fundamentalism” in the subtitle. The significance of these two lexical choices can be ascribed to the intertextual function they serve. On a paradigmatic plane, choosing the item “Dawkins” relexicalizes the item “God” in Dawkins’ title, “The God Delusion,” which negates the presence of the complex concept of “God delusion,” except in the mind of Dawkins himself. Thus, plausibly, this type of relexicalization-bound intertextuality is an attempt to remodel Dawkins’ mental representation of God as a delusion in the minds of those who believe in the existence of God. Further, selecting the expression “atheist fundamentalism” relexicalizes Dawkins’ reiterated expression of “religious fundamentalism.” Thereupon, the intertextual link between the two books arises from two clashing event models: one is related to the violent acts practiced by religious fundamentalists of all sorts – e.g., the Islamist attackers of the Twin
Towers in the US in 9/11 – and the other to Dawkins’ indiscriminately aggressive rhetoric against all kinds of religion.

Indeed, the intertextual forms of relexicalization (“Dawkins” and “atheist fundamentalism”) appearing in the book title can be said to contribute to the organization of all local meanings of intertextuality in the rest of the book; this means that these two intertextual forms may cognitively impact on the information of the macronodes of the mental models of the readers of this book. In other words, the intertextual links evoked by these lexical choices may activate or form mental models of certain events that would direct the reader towards developing a critical conceptualization of *The God Delusion*; and this is precisely what the author of *The Dawkins Delusion?* aspires to achieve. In his introduction, the author has made explicit that his purpose of writing the book is to effect “a critical engagement with the arguments set out in *The God Delusion*” (2007, p. xiii).

The second form of intertextuality is the rhetorical contrast between Dawkins as the “scientific popularizer” and Dawkins as the “atheist polemicist”; such a contrast can be found in McGrath’s first two paragraphs in his introduction to the book. In the first paragraph, McGrath refers to Dawkins as an author of *The Selfish Gene* (1976), and labelled the author as “one of the most successful and skilful scientific popularizers”; thus, McGrath constructed a favourable event model of a scientist who managed to make his specialization (evolutionary biology) “accessible and interesting to a new generation of readers.” This may evoke a positive intertextual reference to Dawkins as an evolutionary biologist. But, moving to the second paragraph, a rhetorical shift of contrast transpires, with McGrath referring to Dawkins as an author of *The God Delusion* (2006), who, because of such a work, has become “the world’s most high-profile atheist polemicist.” Using these negative epithets of Dawkins, as the author of *The God Delusion*, McGrath formed an unfavourable event model of a different situation about Dawkins as an atheist who has polemically directed “a withering criticism against every form of religion.” Here, an important implication arises from the expression “every form of religion,” namely, Dawkins’ failure to develop a critical evaluation of “religion” as a concept, mainly because of his sweeping generalization about all religions. This intertextual reference to Dawkins, the “atheist polemicist,” has cognitively prepared the religious reader to form an unfavourable event model of Dawkins.

The third form of intertextuality with Dawkins’ *The God Delusion* at the level of the local meanings of McGrath’s introduction is presupposition. The main form of presuppositional intertextuality can be found in the following statement: “Though an atheist, Gould was absolutely clear that the natural sciences […] were consistent with both atheism and conventional religious belief.” The statement presupposes that pre-eminent atheists, who share the same scientific specialization as Dawkins, do not share Dawkins’ event model of advocating science-religion incompatibility. Clearly, this presuppositional meaning is highly intertextual with Dawkins, especially in view of the fact, stated by McGrath in the introduction, that Stephen Jay Gould is Dawkins’ American colleague, who is specialized in evolutionary biology at Oxford University.

Now, for the sake of offering a comprehensive analysis of McGrath’s local-meaning forms of the intertextuality cothematic with *The God Delusion*, there should be a focus on the pragmatic context models controlling these micro forms as well as mediating them and other macro forms of social and societal structures.
Polarized Context Models and the Intertextuality of Religiosity and Atheism

At this point of analysis, scrutinizing the context model that McGrath draws on – as opposed to the context model drawn upon by Dawkins in the production of *The God Delusion* – in producing the above discursive forms of cothematic intertextuality can aid in explaining such forms. This is feasible should there be an investigation of the various constraints of the context models controlling the different locally semantic and rhetorical forms of cothematic intertextuality in *The Dawkins Delusion*? From the clashing mental representations and event models identified above, there seems to be a conceptual polarization of two context models associated with McGrath as the author of *The Dawkins Delusion*? and Dawkins as the author of *The God Delusion*: religiosity and atheism. Each context model seems to emerge in a form of schema-based categories. There are three such categories: (i) spatiotemporal setting, (ii) communicative action, and (iii) participants (identities, roles, relations, goals, knowledge, and ideologies); the three categories are presented contrastively here in a way that accentuates the context models’ constraints on the forms of cothematic intertextuality indicated earlier above.

As regards spatiotemporal settings, all the previous forms of cothematic intertextuality in *The Dawkins Delusion*? have a definite place and time. The place is an intellectual medium represented by a published book and the time is 2007. Both elements are intertextually significant, in that they materially frame McGrath’s polemical response towards Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*. Again, along the same parameter of spatiotemporal setting, the latter book is itself a concrete intellectual medium with the time frame 2006. It is through this category of spatiotemporal setting that the semantic and rhetorical forms of cothematic intertextuality have been textually enabled in one communicative action; and this is the second schema-based category to be discussed here.

McGrath’s *The Dawkins Delusion*? can be described as being the communicative action of publishing a book in response to Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*. The action is being performed through the two pivotal speech acts of defending Christian belief and attacking Dawkins’ version of atheist fundamentalism. Both speech acts run in cothematic intertextuality with Dawkins’ speech acts in the communicative event of publishing *The Dawkins Delusion*?: declaring the non-existence of God and attacking all forms of religion. Further, McGrath’s current communicative action has been controlled at the macro societal structure of the Society for Promoting Christian Belief as a publication house whereby the institutional enablement of the whole action was practically possible. Significantly, this macro societal aspect is a manifestation of how the whole communicative action is an instantiation of the socially shared representation of the religious ideology of Christian belief.

Now, moving to the last category of participants as part of the present polarized context models controlling cothematic intertextuality, it can be argued that McGrath and Dawkins have three various significant roles (communicative, social, and occupational). First, apropos the communicative role, McGrath is the producer of *The Dawkins Delusion*? as a book, whose main purpose is to criticize Dawkins, specifically as the author of *The God Delusion*. Notice that, in the introduction to *The Dawkins Delusion*?, McGrath has made evaluative intertextual references to two communicative roles of Dawkins. One relates to Dawkins as the author of *The Selfish Gene* (1976), and it has the positive label of being “one of the most successful and skilful scientific popularizers”; the other relates to Dawkins as the author of *The God Delusion* (2006), and it has the negative label of “atheist polemicist.” Second, regarding the social role, whereas
McGrath is a Christian who studied Christian theology and consequently bases his social values on such a discipline, Dawkins is a pronounced atheist whose hostile approach to faith and believers in God is no secret.

Third, the occupational roles associated with the two participants have also controlled the forms of cothematic intertextuality in *The Dawkins Delusion*?. Whilst both McGrath and Dawkins are professorially affiliated to the same university, Oxford University, each has a distinct career with individual occupational interests. McGrath is Professor of Historical Theology and Dawkins is Professor of Evolutionary Biology; and thus each has his own peculiar epistemological background on the topic of “religion” and its relation to “science”; and this may explain why McGrath has initially decided to author a whole book in reply to Dawkins’ religiously offensive book of *The God Delusion*. Reverting to the intertextual macropropositions inferred from *The Dawkins Delusion*?, one may realize how the explicit references made to Dawkins reflect his ideological assumptions about how limited science is and the non-existence of warfare between religion and science, and above all about Dawkins’ “misconceptions” about religion itself.

**Findings and Discussion**

The above section of analysis has empirically implemented three procedural stages: (i) inferring and describing cothematically intertextual macropropositions throughout the whole book of McGrath’s *The Dawkins Delusion*?; (ii) conducting the semantic analysis of the local meanings found in the same book as functionally related to the selections consciously made by McGrath; (iii) tackling the context models pertaining to McGrath and Dawkins by highlighting the schema-based categories of spatiotemporal settings, situated actions, and participants controlling the production and reception of the (cothematically) intertextual forms of local meanings in *The Dawkins Delusion*?.

In *The Dawkins Delusion*?, the first stage of the inferential extraction of intertextual macropropositions was analytically focused on addressing the first research question (What are the cothematic intertextual links that globally constitute the discourse(s) drawn upon in *The Dawkins Delusion*??). This analysis stage tackled those macro topics which are cothematic with the topics in *The God Delusion*, including the titles of the two books; both titles were presented as the overall cothematic intertextual macropropositions. The other subsidiary macropropositions projected the cothematic intertextual links of science as being limited in scope and reconcilable with religion, as well as Dawkins’ “misconceptions” about religion and his generalization about the “evil” nature of all religions. Indeed, these cothematic macropropositions were shown to express the general ideological principles of anti-atheism, and thus religiosity, but have been intertextually applied to Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*. Also, crucially, the same intertextual macropropositions were demonstrated to express the overall contents of the mental models of events in the introduction to McGrath’s *The Dawkins Delusion*?; and here the second stage of the sociocognitive discourse-analytical analysis of cothematic intertextuality began to take shape: intertextual local meanings and their mental event models.

At the second stage of local semantic analysis, analytic focus was laid on addressing the second research question (How to explain the intertextual local meanings constructed and generated by their relevant event models in the same book?). This stage investigated the introduction to *The Dawkins Delusion*? as a summary of the whole conceptual framework of the book, and thus it served to condense all the essential local-meaning forms affecting and affected...
by the event models of the author. In the analysis, there have been three forms of local semantic and rhetorical meanings, viz. relexicalization, rhetorical contrast, and presupposition. Crucial about all three forms are the event models referred to in The Dawkins Delusion? and their intertextuality with The God Delusion. For instance, with respect to relexicalization, there emerged McGrath’s mental representation of remodelling the “God delusion” as the “Dawkins delusion” in a way that emphasizes conceptual intertextuality with The God Delusion. Also, the rhetorical contrast highlighted between Dawkins as a scientific popularizer and Dawkins as an atheist polemicist was demonstrated to correspond to the two event models of authoring The Selfish Gene (1976) and The God Delusion (2006), respectively. These two event models have been conducive to the perception of Dawkins as a rational scientist degenerated into a fundamentalist atheist by means of two distinct intertextual references to the authorial identity of Dawkins.

At the third, and final, analysis stage of tackling the context models pertaining to McGrath and Dawkins, analytic focus has shifted towards addressing the third research question (What are the context model’s constraints that control the production and reception of the intertextual local meanings and relate them to macro social/societal structures?). This stage was specifically concerned with probing the context models controlling the production and reception of the various local meanings of cothematic intertextuality. The two context models of both authors, McGrath and Dawkins, have been analysed in terms of the schema-based categories of spatiotemporal setting, communicative action, and participants. At this point of analysis, the various settings of intertextual forms, the overall communicative actions of both authors as well as the participants’ different identities, roles, goals, knowledge, and ideologies have been drawn upon so that these intertextual forms and their corresponding macro social/societal structures can be cognitively mediated. With this form of analysis, two conceptually polarized context models have been revealed: first, McGrath’s context model of religiosity, socially instantiated in the ideology of and knowledge about Christian belief; second, Dawkins’ context model of atheism, socially instantiated in the ideology and knowledge about Darwinism and its scientific ramifications in the discipline of evolutionary biology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the present study has contributed to the analysis of the classic concept of intertextuality as a well-established commingling of Kristeva’s blending of Saussurean and Bakhtinian theories of language and literature. In the present context of research, this contribution has been made possible and feasible with two methodological dimensions of theory and practice. The first methodological dimension has been concerned with elucidating the nature of intertextuality by highlighting Thibault’s (1991) concept of “cothematic intertextuality,” which is construable on the basis of certain lexico-grammatical patterns of combination and co-occurrence. The second dimension has integrated the concept of cothematic intertextuality into van Dijk’s (2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2014) discourse-analytical sociocognitive approach; this has procedurally operated at three complementar stages of analysis: (i) extracting (and describing) the inferentially and cothetically intertextual macropropositions from McGrath’s book, The Dawkins Delusion?; (ii) attempting a semantic analysis of the local meanings found in the same book as functionally related to McGrath’s conscious intertextual selections; (iii) explaining the pragmatic context models associated with both McGrath and Dawkins by highlighting the schema-based categories of spatiotemporal settings, situated
actions, and participants controlling the production and reception of the (cothetically) intertextual forms of local meanings in *The Dawkins Delusion*.

Indeed, the originality of present study can be said to emanate from the synergy of the two methodological dimensions outline above; it is through this synergy that the cothetic intertextuality holding between the two sets of data began to enter into the wider discourse-analytical framework of the sociocognitive approach initiated and developed by van Dijk. Now, one is in a safe position to argue that both dimensions have empirically proven the current research hypothesis (formulated earlier above) in a way that stresses the need for a novel sociocognitive conceptualization of the traditional concept of intertextuality as a cothetic construct that should transcend the limits of descriptive text linguistics and the methodological confines of CDA/CDS.

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The Role of Literature in Boosting EFL University Students’ Critical Thinking: Case of First-year Students in Algeria

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Abstract
The integration of critical thinking within the learning process is considered a crucial indicator of education’s quality. Nevertheless, with the reforms introduced in higher education, less importance was given to this skill; consequently, most Algerian EFL learners cannot think critically and creatively. To fill the gap, this study suggests using literature as a bridge between the teaching of the foreign language and the enhancement of learners’ critical thinking abilities. The research also proposes strategies and approaches to motivate students to use their critical thinking skills in literature class. To this end, the researcher raised the following research question: How do we enhance learners’ critical thinking abilities while teaching literature? And what strategies and approaches to adopt to motivate students using their critical thinking abilities within a literature class? The researcher adopted semi-structured interviews with teachers and classroom observations as instruments to collect necessary data. The participants are EFL university teachers and first-year students of different genders from the department of English language at the University of Dr. Moulay Tahar, Saida (Algeria). Obtained results show positive feedback from the students towards the critical thinking approaches used by the teacher-researcher in literature class. It also revealed that teachers are aware of the effectiveness of critical thinking when teaching literature to improve the learners’ proficiency in English as a foreign language and enhance their critical thinking abilities. This study recommended using high order of thinking as a strategy when teaching literature.

Keywords: Algeria University, critical thinking, EFL learners at Saida University, high-order thinking, literature teaching

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Introduction

One of the fundamental elements for the development of the 21st century education is the implementation of critical thinking skills, which require reflective and rational thinking to investigate and solve problems. This is probably the reason for which most of the universities worldwide set the development of the students’ critical thinking abilities as their primary goal, to make their students able to meet the demands of professional and social life. This ability became essential to living effectively in this constantly changing world.

Literature is viewed by many scholars as an appropriate setting in which critical thinking can be fluently and effectively developed. Fisher (1999) stated solid pedagogical reasons for developing thinking skills using literature. Accordingly, the interest of the present paper is to demonstrate that literature can be an adequate tool to boost learners’ critical thinking. Besides, it tends to prove that a shift towards learning based on the high order of thinking in the teaching of English as a foreign language in general and literature, in particular, can promote the learners’ proficiency of the foreign language and urge them to use their critical thinking abilities. To this end, the researcher raised the following research question:

- How do we enhance learners’ critical thinking abilities while teaching literature?
- What strategies and approaches to adopt to motivate students using their critical thinking abilities within a literature class?

To probe the potential advantages of using literary texts as a material in boosting students’ thinking abilities, the researcher, has adopted semi-structured interviews with teachers and classroom observation as tools to investigate the raised research questions.

Literature Review

Understanding Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking (CT) is a complex process that develops in every individual having the capacity and the disposition to seek reasons, truth, and evidence. Many scholars have proposed different definitions to the concept, yet no single description accepted by all has been formulated because, as Black (2007) argued, “Critical thinking is difficult to define satisfactorily and hard to measure” (p. 4). The earliest significant debates and examinations of the concept were conducted by Dewey (1916) when he discussed the concept of CT in education. He considered CT as “a process that begins with a problem and ends with a solution and self-interpretation” (cited in Alsaleh 2020, p. 21). In this context, Bean (2011) explained this point, declaring that this problem must arouse learners’ curiosity to encourage them to learn using their critical skills.

Various scholars agreed with Dewey’s view that CT is about solving problems; for example, Butterworth and Thwaites (2013) distinguished between being critical and thinking critically. Using critical thinking, according to them, does not only refer determination of a problem or expressing disapproval towards something but means giving just and objective opinions. Contrasted to the impression provided by various textbooks, the writers emphasize that critical thinking is not only directed at arguments besides it also items of evidence, statements, assertions, explanations, dialogues, statistics, news stories, etc. Consequently, the objects of critical thinking are texts, be they visual, oral, or written (both non-literary and literary). According to Lau (2011), critical thinking requires “thinking precisely and systematically, and following the rules of logic and scientific reasoning, among other things” (p.
1). Whereas, Mason (2008, p. 5) thought that “critical thinking is the ability to apply rational thoughts and the evaluation of one’s competence to manifest reasons” (cited in Tabackova, 2015, p. 730). The concept may either refer to a skill or to the result of using this skill. Paul and Elder (2007) maintained that a critical thinker is someone able to detect problems and raise crucial questions in a clear and precise way, capable of collecting and assessing pertinent information and interpreting abstract ideas successfully, qualified in drawing up conclusions and suggesting appropriate solutions. They emphasized that critical thinking is “self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored and self-correcting thinking” (p. 4).

Halpren (1997) explained that CT refers to “the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. It is used to describe thinking that is purposeful, reasoned and goal direct” (p. 4). This implies that when people think critically, they assess the results of their thoughts, ascertain how good a decision is, or recognize how successfully an issue has been addressed.

All the above definitions share the idea that CT is based on two distinct elements these are: the skill of critical reasoning, i.e., the ability to infer judgments, evaluate, assess, etc.) in addition to a moral disposition, i.e., willingness to accept new ideas, concepts and viewpoints (Tobackova, 2015), however, it is worth mentioning in this context that, unlike skills, dispositions cannot be taught but are cultivated through modeling activities (Reece, 2002, cited in khatib & shakouri, 2013). The crucial question in this context is how to incorporate both aspects of CT in the EFL classroom?

Critical Thinking: Why Literature?

Literature represents a perfect setting for the practice of CT skills; in their attempt to understand, analyze, and interpret the literary text, be it prose, drama, or poetry, the learners are continually and endlessly using CT strategies. Literature is the mirror of society; this will effectively help the learners to find or create a relation between the literary text and real-life experiences.

In this context, Brookhart (2010) argued that CT has developed through Bloom’s taxonomy and focuses the most on knowledge transfer, which refers to the students’ capacity to utilize the knowledge they acquired in class in real-life. Through this capacity of transferring the knowledge and thinking critically, the learners of English as a foreign language can appreciate the target culture and compare it with their own; they became also be able to determine from whose perspective the story is narrated and how to react in real-life situations which are similar to the once the characters face in the literary text.

Many scholars and researchers recommended the use of literature in EFL context to enhance the learners’ CT abilities; for example, Collie and Slater (1990) stated that “literary texts are valuable as authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment, and, personal involvement” (p. 3), this means that through reading the English literary text the learner is using simultaneously what CT experts call explanation, analysis, and application. Additionally, Yong (1996) enumerated two essential advantages of literary texts when dealing with CT, saying:

Literary texts have two crucial advantages over traditional content as they entertain students’ pervasive apprehension making it easy for them to learn from the beginning that
critical thinking is natural, familiar, and sometimes even fun. Second, literary texts put issues of critical thinking in an easily remembered context. (p. 90)

This means that literature represents an adequate context for practicing CT skills easily and naturally because, in its essence, literature is a source of entertainment and pleasure; this will probably make the learners feel comfortable and pleasant when dealing with a text that they enjoy; consequently, they will react positively in class.

**Developing CT in EFL classroom: Approaches and Strategies**

Integrating the teaching of CT as one of the basic learning skills is very important. The concept itself has become, as Fisher (2001) expressed, “a buzz word” in the educational environment. Even though CT is not new, it has become prevalent in educational settings over the last decades. Educators in different areas of foreign language learning have described CT skills as a must for academic as well as professional work; Pally (2000, p.53) argued that “students should be able to attain English language competence in cause and effect, description, categorization, and differentiation specifically for comparison and contrast” (cited in Abdollah, 2019, p. 92). Therefore, the promotion of CT into the EFL classroom is significant; Shikhani and Fahim (2011) listed three reasons to do that, these are:

1. CT allows students to take charge of their thinking. Through this ability, they can monitor and evaluate their learning methods more successfully.
2. CT increases students’ learning experience and makes the language more meaningful.
3. CT significantly and positively correlates with students’ achievements (Fong et al., 2017)

Additionally, many studies examine the efficiency of using particular teaching strategies such as classroom discussion, collaborative learning, discussion approaches, and problem-based teaching (Kuhn, 1999). Therefore, it is the role of teachers to choose the strategy that encourages students to understand and apply such skills and encourage them to discuss their understanding with their classmates, because in the course discussion, “students aim at producing their answers and interpretations and to understand and evaluate the answers and the interpretations of their friends” (Hasen & Selmi, 2012, p.98, as cited in Alsaleh, 2020, p. 28), so the dynamics and continued nature of a practical discussion allow for the flow of ideas and the development of the thinking of all learners.

EFL teachers must determine their learners’ abilities and difficulties besides adopting appropriate methods to facilitate the learning process for their non-native students. McNeil (2011) recommended a move from low-level thinking to higher-level thinking, which is referred to as scaffolding, in teaching English as a foreign and literature as a subject area (cited in Gopalan & Hashim, 2021, p.321).

Higher-order thinking is assigned to Bloom’s Taxonomy, which implies a hierarchy of six stages of thinking; this suggests that the higher-level skills are more cognitively challenging. The capacity to master them means the ability to master all other levels below that level. The revised taxonomy suggests that the levels of information, comprehension, and implementation (remembering, understanding, and applying) are also considered as low-level teaching questions
and objectives; higher levels consist of analysis, synthesis, and, evaluation. Tobackova (2015) argued that: “While, strategies applied to low levels include rehearsing, rewriting, and rereading information to be remembered, high-level questions encourage students to ask how and why something happened, to compare, evaluate and draw a conclusion” (p. 728).

Such questions need to use complex cognitive strategies related to critical thinking; in this regard, literature involves high levels of thinking because students must analyze, contrast, and infer ideas about the literary text they are dealing with; therefore, the discussed taxonomies above can be beneficial strategies to adopt while teaching literature within the EFL context as demonstrated in table one:

Table 1. *Bloom’s and Anderson’s Taxonomies and representative literature questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom (1956)</th>
<th>Anderson et al. (2001)</th>
<th>Example questions related to literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>Who are the main characters of the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>What was the problem the main character had to solve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>How are the personal problems of the characters in the story similar to the ones that real people face?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>What literary devices are being used to convey to the reader the character’s feelings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>Based on the story you have read, how effective were the strategies the characters took to overcome the problems that they faced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>Develop a set of three criteria for assessing problem-solving strategies to be used in situations similar to what the characters in the story faced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note 1. Adopted from Gopalan and Harwati (2021, p. 322)*

**Methods**

The researcher adopted a Mixed-method approach of research relying on experimental methodology. Both qualitative and quantitative were used to explore students' responses to high-order thinking used by the teacher-researcher to teach literature and examine EFL teachers' opinions towards the use of different critical thinking approaches in teaching English as a foreign language. The use of this approach helped tackle the research from different perspectives.

**Research Instruments**

Two different research instruments were used: a semi-structured interview with 20 EFL teachers and classroom observation of six groups of first-year EFL students. Each group includes
30 students, approximately 180. The combination of both approaches qualitative, and quantitative, helps to expand the validity of results.

Participants

The participants are EFL university teachers and first-year students of different genders from the department of English language at the University of Dr. Moulay Tahar, Saida (Algeria). The researcher conducted observations in two academic years (2019-2020, 2020-2021) with different students to assume research reliability.

Findings

Interview Results

The data obtained from the interview are as follows:

**Question 1:** Do you think that literature enhances learners’ CT?
All participants strongly agree that literature is valuable and essential to developing learners’ CT skills. Though not all of the respondents are specialized in literature, most of them believe that reading a literary piece will help students to make intelligent judgments and draw up decisions based on reflective thoughts.

**Question 2:** Do you think that classroom discussions help students to understand the meaning of the literary text?
All the interviewed teachers approve that classroom discussions help the students a lot to understand the text. Some participants even confess that sometimes students learn better from their peers than from the teachers.

**Question 3:** Do classroom activities (pair work, group works) encourage students to explore depth thinking?
The obtained result for this question is: 07 teachers agreed that both activities are essential in boosting students’ critical thinking abilities and 13 teachers believe that group works are more valuable than pair work.

**Question 4:** Can literature develop students’ creativity?
The respondents strongly agree that literature helps in developing learners’ creativity and consider it as a source of inspiration. According to them, being exposed to another culture may increase the learners’ imagination too.

Classroom Observations Results

The researcher used Bloom and Anderson’s taxonomies in her literature classes. She focused on higher-order of thinking when asking questions to the students during the study of the story *The Old Man and the Sea*. She also encouraged the learners to participate in classroom discussions, urging them to give their points of view and share their understandings of the events with their classmates. The teacher-researcher avoided interrupting her students’ speech and correcting their mistakes immediately. Her classroom observations revealed the following:

Students’ low proficiency in the English language was the primary reason behind their lack of self-confidence. Consequently, they avoided taking part in the discussion during the lectures. When the students realized that literature as a subject area could improve their skills as EFL learners, they became more attentive. The students show their interest by reading the story, asking questions, and above all, expressing their thoughts.
The teacher focused on higher-order of thinking by cantering the levels of analyzing, evaluating, and creating suggested in Anderson’s taxonomy when asking a question such as:
- What does the sea represent for Santiago (the protagonist)?
- Do you approve his decision?
- What does Santiago’s struggle mean for you?

Some students did not appreciate the story; they found it boring and meaningless. This category of learners was unmotivated, and their answers were superficial. While the responses of the students who appreciated the literary piece were entirely satisfactory, reflecting their depth of thinking.

Riham (one of the students), for example, thinks that the character of Santiago “was foolish when he went deep in the sea, risking his life for something uncertain. I think life is precious, we should not take such risks”. On the other hand, Meise opposed her classmate's point of view when arguing that:

Santiago is a courageous person because he did not give up. People should struggle for their dreams and wishes. The character was of great inspiration to me. I have heart trouble yet am firmly convinced that I have to be like Santiago in life. I mean, I have to fight my own battle and not give up because of my illness.

Another student responds, “the story makes me aware that perseverance means success. Despite all the troubles and circumstances if we don’t give up, we will certainly achieve our objectives”. Khouloud did not appreciate the end of the story and suggested a new one saying:

I preferred that Santiago died in the sea while fighting the sharks giving him another existence through Mandoline (the disciple of Santiago in the novella). He was his apprentice either in learning the craft of fishing or the philosophy of life. So after growing up, Mandoline would be a better version of Santiago with a yang body and strong spirit.

**Discussion**

The semi-structured interview with teachers revealed that literature develops learners’ CT abilities. They will learn to synthesize and evaluate concepts and interpret events; this will help to extend their imagination and boost their creativity. To achieve this level, the teachers encouraged group work activities. Working together, teachers explained, put the students in a learner-centered environment in which they are the monitors of the activity. Through this kind of work, students share their information, learn better and, develop their CT abilities as well as linguistic skills.

Classroom observations indicate that the students who appreciated the story were very active in class. They attempted to understand the novella by analyzing and evaluating its events. The learners were interested in the protagonist’s struggle; they were involved in the text and engaged in class discussions. Students were confident in expressing their points of view and succeeded in making the connexion between the fictional text and real life. Some of them were very creative in their answers.
The results revealed that literature is an essential medium to ensure the integration of CT skills in the curriculum. Collie and Slater (1990) asserted that “literary texts are valuable and authentic materials” (p. 3), because they entertain the students on the one hand, and contain different linguistic and grammatical forms on the other. Additionally, these texts are suitable pedagogical support to develop the students’ CT abilities.

**Research Implications**

Literature can provide a reliable tool to motivate students to think critically. It is the role of the teacher to choose the appropriate strategies to combine the teaching of literature with critical thinking enhancement. Based on the researcher's experience, the following suggestions are made:

- Make literature enjoyable for the students by selecting texts that make the learners interested in reading because critical thinking requires the students’ disposition to decide, discern, and judge.
- Give more importance to classroom discussions and motivate the learners to reach their conclusions based on their understanding of the literary text. This will urge the students to practice their CT skills (Arbain & Nour 2017, cited in Yoges & Harwati, 2021).
- Ask appropriate questions to orient learners to think critically by focusing on higher-order thinking. In asking questions, teachers should be thoroughly ordered from the ones focusing on the content issues to those aiming at interpretative issues. The lesson will, therefore, shift from remembering to understanding the information by analyzing and evaluating its content and enhancing creativity.
- Provide adequate group activities that allow the students to reason together, discuss their reasoning and evaluate their results.

**Conclusion**

The main aim of this study was to scrutinize the use of literature to enhance EFL learners’ critical thinking abilities. It also aimed to provide appropriate methods to motivate the students to think critically. Findings revealed that all the teachers of literature interviewed approve of the effectiveness of critical thinking approaches to reach a deep understanding of the literary text. It also unveiled that a shift towards high-order thinking is advantageous and long-lasting learning because it leads the students to make rational and intelligent judgments, draw up decisions and, develop new ideas based on reflective thoughts. This study recommended using high order of thinking as a strategy when teaching literature; it cannot be generalized in other EFL classes, while further investigation is needed to explore the efficiency of critical thinking approaches in teaching different subject areas.

**About the Author**

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**References**

Saudi Students’ Attitudes to the Use of Subtitles to Improve Their Listening Skills

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Abstract
The role of subtitles in improving listening skills is a controversial issue in the literature of second language (L2) learning. This study attempted to investigate L2 learners’ attitudes to the use of subtitles when watching English audio-visual materials. Investigating L2 learners’ attitudes to the use of subtitles may have implications for designing listening courses in education organisations around the world. The study recruited 63 Saudi third-year students from an English department at a Saudi university. The data was collected by means of a closed-ended questionnaire containing 23 Likert-scale items. The results indicated that most participants: a) agreed that listening skills are important; b) had more positive attitudes to the use of English subtitles (captions) than to Arabic subtitles; c) expressed positive attitudes to people who use articles; and d) acknowledged that the use of captions had a greater positive impact on L2 learning than either Arabic subtitles or no subtitles at all.

Keywords: attitudes, EFL learners, listening skills, subtitles

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Introduction
There is no method that is guaranteed to be effective for teaching or learning English (Dizon & Thanyawatpokin, 2021; Rokni & Ataee, 2014). For both teachers and learners, the primary objective is to improve the four key skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Metruk, 2018). Of these, according to Peters et al. (2016), listening has received the least attention from researchers. Peters et al (2016) also state that audio-visual materials that reflect everyday English have been found to be beneficial for listening comprehension. Students should therefore watch films and other materials that include clear and authentic input. Films that have first language (L1) and/or L2 subtitles or captions can promote listening comprehension by helping L2 learners associate gestural with spoken language (Faqe, 2020; Richards, 2002). To date, there have been no studies that examine Saudi L2 learners’ attitudes to English subtitles. This study addresses that gap by investigating the following research question:

1. What are L2 learners’ views about:
   a) Listening skills;
   b) Personal use of subtitles;
   c) People who use subtitles;
   d) The benefits and drawbacks of subtitles;
   e) The potential impact of subtitles on L2 learning of English?

Listening comprehension
Listening better is crucial for L2 acquisition (Masrai, 2019; Metruk, 2019; Rokni & Ataee, 2014). L2 learners listen twice as much as they speak in the L2 (Ghoneam, 2015). Listening is not only about hearing spoken language but also about making sense of it (Alabsi, 2020). Intelligent guessing is more important for listening comprehension than understanding the literal meaning of each word (Ellis, 1994). Listening comprehension seems to be an easy task for L1 speakers of a given language but not for L2 learners (Graham, 2006).

Listening to L2 input is essential for the success of L2 language acquisition. Krashen’s (1985) influential comprehensible input hypothesis proposes that for L2 language acquisition to be successful, L2 learners need to be exposed only to comprehensible input that is slightly above their current proficiency level.

Subtitles and captions
Much of the research on improving L2 learners’ English proficiency levels has addressed the role of reading rather than listening (Masrai, 2019). L2 learners in the classroom are not exposed to enough listening input to learn English and need to find other exposure opportunities, one of which is watching audio-visual materials (Masrai, 2019). Moreover, many countries around the world do not dub foreign films and video materials in their official languages, but use subtitles instead (Masrai, 2019; Peters et al., 2016; Talaván Zanón, 2006), which can also cover some of a video’s visuals. Although Talaván Zanón (2006) has suggested that many viewers dislike subtitles, which they find distracting, bothering and a nuisance, Vanderplank (1988, p.272) argues that subtitles may be useful in L2 acquisition, and not just a distraction or route to laziness, which is why some countries prefer to use subtitles over dubbing for educational reasons. Peters et al. (2016) state that both L1 subtitles and L1 captions are beneficial for L2 learning because they link visuals to text to language (Faqe, 2020; King, 2002; Richards, 2002;
Talaván Zanón, 2006). However, both captions and subtitles can make L2 learners dependent on them (Danan, 2004; Talaván Zanón, 2006).

**Literature review**

There is no consensus in the literature of language learning regarding whether L1 subtitles and captions hinder or benefit listening comprehension in L2 (Dizon & Thanyawatpokin, 2021; Latifi et al., 2011; Robin, 2007). This section briefly discusses a number of studies that have examined the potential roles of L1 subtitles and captions.

In 2015, Ghoneam recruited a total of 104 participants whose L1 was Egyptian I to investigate the impacts of L1 subtitles and captions on listening comprehension. He created three groups for his longitudinal study, each of which was assigned a different task. One group watched films with I subtitles (captions); a second group watched films with I subtitles; and a third group watched films with no subtitles. The participants were pre-tested on their listening comprehension. They then watched seven films over four weeks. Six weeks after their pre-test, participants were given a multiple-choice listening comprehension test. This demonstrated, first of all, that the groups that had watched films with subtitles in either language had learned more than the group that watched films with no subtitles at all. Secondly, the group that watched films with I (L1) subtitles outperformed the group that had watched them with I (L2) subtitles. The researcher did not indicate whether the participants had access to other audio-visual materials that could account for their improvement between the pre- and post-tests.

Metruk (2018) recruited 30 university-level L1 Slovak learners of I for his study of the impact of subtitles on listening and reading comprehension. He first administered a questionnaire on participants’ use of subtitles, and then divided them into three groups based on their subtitle language preferences. One group used I subtitles when watching films; another used Slovak subtitles; and a third used no subtitles. He then administered a variety of written tests. The findings showed that the group that watched films with Slovak (L1) subtitles outperformed both the other groups and that there were no significant differences between the other two groups. This study was limited by Metruk’s failure to ascertain whether the group that usually watched material subtitled in I also watched other material with Slovak subtitles or none.

Faqe (2020) recruited 31 L1 Kurdish learners of I from the I department of an Iraqi university. The participants watched a 21-minute film without subtitles; they then completed a questionnaire to find out whether their vocabulary had improved. They then watched the film a second time with I subtitles and completed the same questionnaire. They were found to have positive attitudes to subtitles in relation to the question of vocabulary improvement. However, the researcher overlooked the potential role of priming, given that the subtitles accompanied a film they had already seen once. That is, it is not clear whether the repetition of the film or the presence of the subtitles was the reason for their positive attitudes.

Alabsi (2020) studied the impact of subtitles on L2 learning of I. She recruited 76 first-year female university level students whose L1 was Saudi Arabic. The participants were divided into two groups of 38 (experimental and control). Both groups watched the same video. The experimental group was asked to write text subtitles for the video. The participants were pre- and post-tested on their listening comprehension. It was found that the group that wrote subtitles
outperformed the control group. However, Alabsi did not ask participants about their attitudes to the experience; she went on to suggest that future research should explore students’ attitudes to subtitles.

Andriani & Angelina (2020) carried out a study with 31 undergraduate students who were L1 Indonesian learners of I. The study aimed to find out how they perceived I subtitles and their benefits for learning I. Based on the administration of a questionnaire as well as on interviews, the researchers discovered that participants had positive feelings about subtitles. Notably, all the studies above indicate that participants find subtitles beneficial for L2 learning of I (i.e., Alabsi, 2020; Andriani & Angelina, 2020; Faqe, 2020; Ghoneam, 2015). This study further investigates this by seeking I students’ attitudes to the use of subtitles, since Alabsi’s (2020) study with female Saudi students, discussed above, did not examine their attitudes.

Methodology
The study was conducted with 63 Saudi university-level students (29 female and 34 male, whose mean age was 20.9). They were third-year students in the English department of a Saudi university. Participants who were bilingual or who had started acquiring English at a young age in an English-speaking country were screened out.

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that contained 23 closed-ended questions and used a Likert-scale to address five constructs: a) listening skills; b) personal use of subtitles; c) attitudes to people who use subtitles; d) the benefits and drawbacks of subtitles; and e) the potential impact of subtitles on L2 learning of the English language.

The questionnaire was administered online due to the Covid-19 restrictions. A link was sent to participants, who were told that they could complete the questionnaire at any time they wanted over the following month. This was done so that they did not feel pressured to finish it quickly, which may have affected the quality of their answers. Participants were informed about the nature of the questionnaire and the study and their consent was obtained.

Results
The results for each of the five constructs are reported below: a) listening skills; b) personal use of subtitles; c) attitudes to people who use subtitles; d) the benefits and drawbacks of using subtitles; and e) the potential impact of subtitles on L2 learning of the English language.

Table 1. Participants’ attitudes to listening skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Improving my listening skills makes me proficient in English.</td>
<td>n=100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 1.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is important to improve my listening skills in English.</td>
<td>n=100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 1.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Improving my listening skills is not important.</td>
<td>n=100</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 69.8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My teacher should not focus on improving my listening skills.</td>
<td>n=100</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 46%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants agreed that improving their listening skills is important. They also had positive attitudes to teachers’ help with improving their listening skills.

Table 2. Participants’ attitudes to the personal use of subtitles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. I prefer to watch English audio-visual materials with Arabic subtitles.</td>
<td>n=7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 11.1%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I prefer to watch English audio-visual materials with English subtitles.</td>
<td>n=2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 3.2%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I prefer to watch English audio-visual materials without subtitles.</td>
<td>n=1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 1.6%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I cannot watch English audio-visual materials without subtitles.</td>
<td>n=23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 36.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I prefer not to watch audio-visual materials that have subtitles.</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 20.6%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Using or not using subtitles depends on the type of audio-visual materials (e.g., movies, documentaries, TV shows, news).</td>
<td>n=1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 1.6%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I feel uncomfortable when I do not understand the English dialogue in audio-visual materials.</td>
<td>n=5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 7.9%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants had positive attitudes to the personal use of English subtitles but not to the personal use of Arabic subtitles. In general, they had positive attitudes toward subtitles. They agreed that not understanding spoken English made them uncomfortable.

Table 3. Participants’ attitudes to people who use subtitles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I don’t want other people to know that I watch movies with subtitles.</td>
<td>n=34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 54%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I think that people who watch audio-visual materials with subtitles are no good at English.</td>
<td>n=28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 44.4%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants felt confident using subtitles. Their attitudes suggested that they did not link English language proficiency with understanding English audio-visual materials.

Table 4. Participants’ attitudes to the benefits and drawbacks of subtitles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Subtitles distract me from enjoying audio-visual materials.</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 20.6%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Subtitles help me enjoy watching audio-visual materials.</td>
<td>n=4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab World English Journal
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Saudi Students’ Attitudes to the Use of Subtitles

Alzamil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>6.3%</th>
<th>12.7%</th>
<th>17.5%</th>
<th>49.2%</th>
<th>14.3%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. I like using subtitles because I don’t have to worry about not understanding dialogue.</td>
<td>n=</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Subtitles help me link body language, facial expressions and gestures with spoken language.</td>
<td>n=</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I cannot concentrate on video visuals while reading subtitles.</td>
<td>n=</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Reading subtitles makes me tired.</td>
<td>n=</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They linked their enjoyment of audio-visual materials with their ability to understand them, which was facilitated by the use of subtitles. They generally did not express any concern regarding the drawbacks of subtitles. In fact, they acknowledged their benefits.

Table 5. Participants’ attitudes to the potential impact of subtitles on L2 learning of English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. Watching audio-visual materials with Arabic subtitles improves my English.</td>
<td>n=</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Watching audio-visual materials with English subtitles improves my English.</td>
<td>n=</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Watching audio-visual materials without subtitles improves my English.</td>
<td>n=</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants expressed positive attitudes to the use of both English subtitles and no subtitles in terms of improving their English proficiency. This was not the case with the use of Arabic subtitles.

Discussion
This section discusses the results in the light of the research question, which was:

1. What are L2 learners’ views about:
   a) Listening skills;
   b) Personal use of subtitles;
   c) People who use subtitles;
   d) The benefits and drawbacks of using subtitles;
   e) The potential impact of using subtitles on L2 learning of English.

Concerning their attitudes to listening skills, more than 90% of the participants agreed that listening skills are important, with more than 80% agreeing that teachers should help them improve their listening skills. These findings were in line with Ghoneam’s (2015) and Metruk’s (2018) findings regarding the importance of improving listening skills.

With regard to the use of subtitles, more than 84% of the participants had positive attitudes to the use of English subtitles compared with 50.8% who were positive about the use of no subtitles and 28.1% about the use of Arabic subtitles. This shows that the participants would rather watch audio-materials with no subtitles than with Arabic. This can be seen in the 69.8% of
participants who expressed disagreement with statement 9, ‘I cannot watch English audio-visual materials without subtitles.’ Apart from this, 68.2% disagreed with statement 10, ‘I prefer not to watch audio-visual materials that have subtitles.’ This shows that they can watch audio-visual materials in English whether they have subtitles or not. However, more than 80% felt that whether or not they would use subtitles depended on the type of audio-visual material (statement 11), as more than 75% would not feel comfortable if they did not understand English dialogue. These findings support Andriani & Angelina (2020). However, Andriani & Angelina (2020) found that their participants had positive attitudes to subtitles in general, whereas this study found that they favoured English subtitles in particular.

Among those who used subtitles, participants seemed indifferent about whether others knew that they use subtitles when watching English films. Most expressed disagreement (82.2%) with the statement that using subtitles indicates low proficiency levels. These findings are interesting as other studies reviewed in the literature did not look at whether L2 learners care about others’ impressions of them or whether the use of subtitles indicates incompetence. It seems that L2 learners tend to use subtitles confidently, and they acknowledge the fact that not understanding spoken English does not always reflect English proficiency.

Concerning the benefits and drawbacks of using subtitles, most participants indicated that using subtitles helped them enjoy watching English audio-visual materials. This is because using subtitles makes them comfortable that they understand English audio-visual materials. This is due to the fact that using subtitles helps them link body language with spoken language. In general, participants saw no drawbacks to the use of subtitles and most found them easy to read. With regard to the relationship between the use of subtitles and improvement in English proficiency, almost all participants (92.1%) thought that watching English audio-visual materials with English subtitles leads to an improvement in their English. Moreover, 63.5% linked not using subtitles with language improvement compared with only 25.4% who linked the use of Arabic subtitles to improvement in English. This finding contrasts with the studies of both Ghoneam (2015) and Metruk (2018), who found that their participants benefited more from using L1 subtitles. This study did not conduct an experiment to address this.

The findings of this study have implications for L2 learners in Saudi Arabia. Participants showed positive attitudes to: a) the importance of listening skills; b) the use of English subtitles; and c) the potentially positive impact of English subtitles. These results indicate that curriculum designers in Saudi Arabia and around the world should take into consideration that L2 learners link their use of subtitles to improvements in English in general and listening skills in particular. This is supported by the findings of the other studies discussed here, which found that subtitles improve learners’ L2 English (i.e., Alabsi, 2020; Andriani & Angelina, 2020; Faqe, 2020; Ghoneam, 2015). This means that viewing audio-visual materials with subtitles in schools can have a positive impact on their English proficiency levels.

Conclusion
The study investigated L2 learners’ attitudes to the use of subtitles and captions. It was found that most had more positive attitudes to the use of captions than to Arabic subtitles or to not using subtitles at all. Most of them did not think that those who used subtitles and captions had
poor proficiency in English. They also deemed the use of captions beneficial for L2 language improvement.

**Limitations and future research**
The study would have benefited from carrying out an experiment to examine the potential effects of subtitles. However, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, this was not possible. According to Latifi et al (2011), studies that have investigated the potential effects of subtitles on listening comprehension have looked only at short-term effects. This emphasises the need for a longitudinal study that follows L2 learners over a long period of time to assess the potential effects of subtitles on L2 English learning.

**About the Author:**
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**References**
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Researcher/Writer Identity: Exploring Awareness, Manifestations and Implications of EFL Scholars’ and Applied linguists’ Identities

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Abstract
Interest in both Identity and Academic Writing and Discourse has recently remarkably resurged. This has been so in both applied linguistics and discourse studies. As a result, many dominant ideas, practices, and paradigms have been criticized, challenged, or re-considered. The paper casts light on identity features and manifestations in the academic writing/research discourse of EFL/applied linguists in the context of a Saudi college. Identity research has been significantly under-researched in Majmaah University and KSA in general. The study seeks to answer: 1. Do researchers’ identities manifest themselves in the academic/research discourse of applied linguists and EFL scholars? If so, in what ways can these identities and self-manifestations appear in the academic and research discourse of applied linguists and EFL scholars? To what extent, if any, are applied linguists and EFL scholars/researchers aware that they represent themselves in their academic and research discourse/writing? We used a mixed-method design to amalgamate data from two primary instruments: questionnaire and interviews, which were analyzed using SPSS and thematic analysis together with some qualitative methods of analysis. Findings suggest that researchers do display themselves in research employing various identity, agency, and voice strategies/techniques and that they are broadly aware of this experience, that these identities are represented via a myriad of linguistic/discourse ways, and that they appear to be aware of this process. The implications of these identity manifestations and self-externalizations for research discourse theory and practice, academic writing, language, and research education were explored and discussed.

Keywords: academic discourse, EFL research, agency, identity, intersectionality, researcher voice

Introduction
Identity research has preeminently resurged in recent years. This resurge has resonated with a growing interest in many new perspectives into fields such as linguistics, language education, academic discourse, critical education, meta-theories, etc., (Alharbi, 2019; Block, 2007; Bourdieu, 1991; Norton, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Swales, 1990; Yazan, Canagarajah & Jain, 2020). While learner and researcher identities have been examined in many settings for the last three decades, there is a big gap in our contexts in such kind of research (Awadelkarim, 2021).

The study of researcher identity is informed by and intersects with a range of postmodernist perspectives in language, identities, writing (post-process writing), met-theories, (meta-theories explain the knowledge claims/beliefs/philosophy underlying research such as cognitivism, constructivism, interpretivism, etc Castelló, et al. 2021).

This investigation is exceedingly significant as researcher identity studies are presumably rare in the context of the Arab World in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. Furthermore, its findings and its theoretical and pedagogical implications are of paramount importance and, in many ways, generalizable to the whole region. More specifically, academic theory and practice in many interdisciplinary fields will be enriched by this type of research.

This study sets out to explore researcher identities in the context of Saudi Arabian English language scholars and applied linguists. For that purpose, it utilizes a set of mixed-method procedures enabling it to dig into the researchers’ minds and experiences concerning their researcher identities and their manifestations in research writing. Specifically, a questionnaire and qualitative interviews were used to collect the relevant data. Afterward, relevant analyses were made for both instruments, and certain valuable conclusions and recommendations were reached.

To pursue the study’s objectives, the following questions will be answered:
1. Do researchers’ identities manifest themselves in the academic/research discourse of applied linguists and EFL scholars?
2. If so, in what ways can these identities and self-manifestations appear in the academic and research discourse of applied linguists and EFL scholars?
3. To what extent, if any, are applied linguists and EFL scholars/researchers aware that they represent themselves in their academic and research discourse/writing?

Literature Review
Academic and Research Discourse
Discourse Studies involve a multitude of perspectives and methods depending on researchers' purposes and interests. Over the last 70 years or so, the study of discourse has gone all the way
long from the study of any stretch of language beyond the sentence level (Harris' 1952) to the study of context to the much more profound perspective of the study of practices (Hewings & North, 2010). The distinction between Speech Community and Discourse Community has been one of Swales' far-reaching contributions to the field of discourse studies (Swales, 1990, 2004; Hewings and North, 2010). While the former refers mainly to the shared linguistic norms and conventions among the members of a particular community, the latter indicates that members further share more profound meaning conventions and meaning-making practices. For some scholars, Speech Community may also refer to other aspects; as put by Hewings and North (2010) "Definitions may emphasize shared language use, frequency of interaction between speakers, shared rules of speaking and interpretation, or shared attitudes and values with respect to language" (p.66). On the other hand, they define discourse community as, a grouping based on a common interest, with common goals and mechanisms for intercommunication between members. It uses participatory tools to provide information and feedback, some specific lexis and genres, and has a threshold level of members with relevant content and discoursal expertise. Swales (1990) identified what he considers "six defining characteristics" for a discourse community:

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of public goals.
2. A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
3. A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
4. A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
5. In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis.
6. A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and expertise (as cited in Jones, 2012, p. 149-150).

An absence of one or more of these six factors could render a group of people ineligible for the term discourse community. It is also noteworthy that the concept of discourse community has been criticized by some scholars as lacking precision and 'analytical rigour' to put it in the words of Hewings & North (2010).

Academic discourse is all but these meaning conventions and commonalities among academic and research communities (Yazan, Canagarajah & Jain, 2020). Academic writing is generally characterised by: complexity, formality, objectivity, precision, hedging, well-organization and planning, etc. It is imperative to note that, by and large, these features may and have changed over time (e.g., the restrictions over the use of personal pronouns in research articles). It is probably this last aspect of attitude change (e.g., towards the use of first-person pronouns in research articles) that marks a striking shift in academia to a more positive view in accepting the reality of researcher identity manifestations and delineation in research writings/discourses. It was previously firmly argued that using these pronouns breaches the
Identity

Despite the resurgence of identity studies in the last few decades, it has still been extremely difficult to define rigorously. Indeed, “identity is not a straightforward notion and has multiple embedded meanings... as several authors have argued, it is not possible—nor appropriate—to provide a single, overarching definition of identity” as put by (Castelló et al. 2021, p. 568). The issue of who we are and what we are lends itself easily to an interdisciplinary approach. Various disciplines share interests in what identities are and how they are shaped, reshaped, practiced and negotiated.

In general, traditional theories of identities tend to look at the phenomena narrowly in terms of being unilateral, one-sided, fixed, context-free, unconstructible and non-negotiable. On the other hand, in modern and postmodern perspectives, identities are conceived of as multifaceted, polygonal, able to be socially constructed, reconstructed, context-bound, can be contradictory, continuously negotiable and changing. Research on identities has revealed that they are of various types and that the same person often possesses more than one identity (Castelló, et al., 2015). An identity may be imposed or achieved (Gee, 2001; Horner & Weber, 2017). Imposed or ascribed in the sense that one's identity is in one way or another shaped by other peoples' ideas and positions about oneself (this calls into otherness into the identity arena); achieved in the sense that one's identity is in many ways constructed by one's own thinking and feelings about oneself (this is the agency part of the process).

Identity practices are an enormously fascinating field of study. These practices are sites where a multitude of factors are constantly at play. Language, as has been established in discourse studies, is a social practice where social struggles, sociocultural structures and power dynamics work alongside the fact that language is a way of action and being, as insightfully put by Gee (2011):

Language does, of course, allow us to inform each other. But it also allows us to do things and to be things, as well. In fact, saying things in a language never goes without also doing things and being things(…) when I talk about "being things", I will use the word in a special way. I do not mean your core sense of self, which you take yourself "essentially" to be. I mean different ways of being in the World at different times and places for different purposes; for example ways of being a "good student", an "avid bird watcher", a 'mainstream politician", a "tough cop", a video-game "gamer", a "Native American", and so on and so forth through a nearly endless list(p.2). Categorization via language is a powerful tool in shaping other people's identity (the labeling act). By calling someone or some people something, we ascribe (impose) some form of identity. This has insightfully been noted by Horner and Weber (2017) as "Labelling is a way of trying to
fix somebody's identity, reducing it to a simple core element that sums up her or his identity" (p. 107). They provided the examples of "foreigner", "immigrant' and "African-American" as sites where hegemony is evident through the discourse of the imposer. Paradoxically, it's not an uncommon practice such an imposed identity will be internalized by those on who it is imposed. However, it can also be challenged or imposed at times. This social constructivism manifests itself in what Gee (2011) calls the capital D (Discourse-identities). It is noteworthy that Gee's four types of identity are very relevant to our discussion of researcher identity: Nature (N-identities), Institution (I-identities), Discourse (D-identities) and Affinity (A-identities).

Some post-colonialist theories such the Indian scholar Bhabha's (1994) notions of hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence as strategies employed by the suppressed/colonized to shape their own fruitful uniqueness have added tremendously to the postmodern enrichment of the theory of identities. In a similar way, and casting light on the changing and dynamic nature of identities in this increasingly complex World, Tano(2019) has argued that “In this era of globalization like the one depicted by Gordimer, identity should be rethought as a fluctuating issue, rather than a fixed and static essence” (p. 175).

Identity and Language Functions

Being, which is an essential function of language, as Gee (2011) points, is part and parcel of identities. Not all these multi-identities are activated equally at the same time, and it will all depend on the context. Two or more identities may conflict at times. It is here that identity-negotiation is needed. Identity negotiation is presumably situated on a more extensivemeaning-negotiation process as part of the meaning-making process (Halliday, 1985). Halliday identified three universal metafunctions (similar in this respect to Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG), but different in that their universality is based on meaning whereas UG is structure-based) and are central to his theory Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). These are: Ideational (relating to establishing and keeping experience; both internal and external experience); Interpersonal (relating to people socializing via language choices and creating social networks) and Textual (relating to texts in whatever mode, written, spoken or multimodal, it shapes, manages and organizes the flow of discourse- cohesion and coherence). In addition, Halliday lists seven functions based on the three metafunctions: 1. Instrumental Function (using language to gain services (e.g. "I want"). 2. Regulatory Function (using language to control and regulate others (demonstrated in the use of the imperative (e.g., open up your books, etc.). 3. Interactional Function (using language for socialization; to interact with others. This function is similar to Roman Jakobson's Phatic Function (greetings, discussing the weather, etc.) 4. Personal Function (using language to talk about self; to relate to oneself (e.g., look at my face, etc.). 5. Heuristic Function (using language to gain information and knowledge about the world/reality (What is Oxygen?) 6. Imaginative Function (using language to create an imaginative world (storytelling, imaginary situation (let's assume, imagine, pretend, etc.) 7. Informative/Representational Function (using language to express facts (Let me tell you that,
etc., the reality is, etc., I've got something to tell you”). Many of these functions intersect with identity shaping and negotiation.

Similarly, Jakobson (1960) provides another set of six language functions. According to Jakobson’s model of communication, each of the six functions corresponds to one element of communication. Jakobson's six functions (associated with his six-factor Model (Referential ‘description of something—physically or mentally’, Poetic ‘language is not just a means to an end, but an end in itself/message for its own sake’, Emotive/Expressive/Affective ‘corresponding to the addressee and the way he conveys his mood/emotion’, Conative ‘corresponding to the addressee-vocatives and imperatives’, Phatic ‘related to Contact/Channel’, and Metalinguial ‘language about language’—associated with Code). Jakobson's functions interface in many ways with Halliday's: the phatic functions is similar to the interactive function, the poetic with imaginative function, the conative with regulatory function, the referential with heuristic function or in some ways with the representational function, the emotive/expressive with the personal function, etc”.

**Figure 1.** Roman Jakobson's Model of Communication (Adopted from Jakobson, 1960 p. 353)

A variety of other similar models might pertinently be referred to in validating the many interplays of the hypothesis of the language functions with issues of identity (e.g., Hymes’ S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G model). The sixteen elements on which the model was based were later reduced to eight and summed up by the above-said acronym: S(setting), P(participants, E(ends), a(act sequence, K(key), I(instrumentalities), N(norms), G(genre). The model intersects in various ways with how communicators' identities are constantly forged, made and remade.

**Manifestations of Identities in Academic and Research Discourse**

The different ways in which identities show up in academic and research discourse have attracted many discourse analysts (Swales, 1990, 2004; Hyland, 2002).

The following are a set of some major strategies of identity manifestations in academic writing discourse:

- **Stance Features** (Hedges: presumably, probably, perhaps, might, etc.).
• -Self-mentions: using personal pronouns (we, I, myself, etc.).
• -Boosters: certainly, definitely, etc.
• -Attitude Markers: Sadly, unfortunately, astonishingly, etc.
• -Appeals to shared knowledge: As we all know that, etc./As is well-known, etc.
• Using questions
• Researchers can exercise a range of strategies to voice up their own ideas, positions.
• Language use is never neutral, never ideology-free as Paltridge (2012) points out.

However, writers may try to hide their ideas (and this happens despite the constraints of research):
• Foregrounding (emphasizing some elements in the text),
• Backgrounding (marginalizing or playing down what would otherwise be essential elements).
• Presuppositions (inherent assumptions in the argument or idea).
• No matter how we may try to hide and suppress our own voice, it will, nonetheless, appear in the text or discourse in a variety of quite subtle ways. Identities can also be demonstrated in co-authorship and team projects (both conflict and identification with other researchers may surface up or lie deep down in texts). Relevantly, these identities and self-manifestations could also interface with the dynamics of power relations and power structures in texts.

Self and Power Dynamics
The self-nature/description has been discussed infinitely in philosophy and different disciplines across history. In existentialism, terms such as the distinctions between Being and Existence, Reflective Consciousness and Unreflective Consciousness, for-itself, in-itself, For-Others, Mine (the combination of the self and not-self, etc., have all but added to the complexity of the issues of selfhood). In recent years, the debate has taken the form of the structure-agency dichotomy, with various approaches favoring each. Structure, generally, refers to the totality of constraints imposed by the overall socio-economic-cultural system (constructivism), while agency indicates the ability of the individuals to resist this and enact their will, resulting in a continuous interplay between the two forces. It is in this constant interplay that writers’ identities are best shaped, enacted, constructed, and negotiated.

Objectivity vs. Subjectivity
Mainstream science and academic research have long claimed access to "objectivity" since the dawn of disciplinariness in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the claim of complete objectivity has for decades been faltering as the complexity of knowledge and its sociocultural and ecological underpinnings and constructivism have increasingly surfaced up, making neat binaries even more tenuous. The current trends in the philosophy of science and science education along with the ubiquity of the use of mixed and qualitative research methods in the humanities have at times even gone further enough to suggest that subjectivity is in fact
unavoidable and that objectivity can presumably be part of subjectivity (Bazzul, 2014). Scientific knowledge is shown to be phenomenological and subjective in ways contrary to long-standing belief. What is more, the recent interest in the notion of "intersubjectivity" (the social and psychological interactions, agreement, and understanding between a group of people in a given culture/context), have contributed to opening up new horizons for the inclusion of new perspectives in research wherein subjectivity in academia could be given more room.

Intersectionality and Identity
Intersectionality is a recent approach to the question of identity. Though the theory emerged out of the feminist movement, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it swiftly became a general approach to identity. It is usually traced back to the black American feminist and critical race theorist Crenshaw (1989) who saw that mainstream feminism ignored the complexity of gender when it inherently presupposed that gender discrimination is fixed and single-sided and merely based on gender issues. Crenshaw (1989) argued that black American women and nonwhite women, in general, suffered a complex form of discrimination (gender, ethnic, social, cultural, economic, etc.), something different from what middle-class white American women suffered. Furthermore, factors have been found not only to be multifarious but also in a continuous and complex relationship with one another; hence the term ‘intersectionality’. Thus, intersectionality is the theory that forms of oppression and discrimination are in fact more multiple, complex and dynamic than previously conceptualized. In a more recent interview with Crenshaw by TIME magazine, she defines intersectionality as “It’s basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What’s often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.”

The notion that social marginalization could be composed of a complex network of different factors, quickly attracted identity theorists. Identities are generally intersectional. The implication of this to researcher identity lies in that it supports the claim of the complexity of identity theory and the complex ways in which identities may manifest in academic and educational discourses.
In the words of Davis (2008), intersectionality is "the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination." Unlike many critics of the theory, Davis (2008) believes that "It is precisely the concept's alleged weaknesses - its ambiguity and open-endedness - that were the secrets to its success and, more generally, make it a good feminist theory" (p.67).
the data, it is particularly useful for the kind of reliability known as “inter-method” reliability which we did in this study. Other methods were also used to ensure validity and internal consistency, such as passing the questionnaire and structured interview drafts to referees who provided various valuable comments. Their points were well-taken in the final design of the instruments. In addition, the Cronbach method of reliability was used.

In the following, we present the context, participants, the data collection method (questionnaire), interviews, etc.

Participants and Context
This study was conducted at Majmaah University and involved researchers from different departments of English within the University. The researchers were selected randomly. The University, despite being newly established in comparison with the older Saudi universities like King Saud University and King Abdelaziz University, has given particular attention to promoting quality research (promotion measures necessitate publishing in high-quality journals such as Scopus/ISI-indexed ones).

Participants were 11 selected randomly, six were PhDs mounting to 54.5%, while four were MAs mounting to 36.4% of the total number of participants alongside one highly experienced participant with a Ph.D. but holding the position of a language instructor. For the interviews, five were selected.

About the number of articles published or accepted for publication (journal, book, chapter, research report, proceedings, etc.), almost all did have at least one paper published or accepted for publication. Their teaching experience ranged from four to more than 20 years and they came from different national and cultural backgrounds, and some of them were multilingual. The latter aspect was particularly crucial for the study as the issue of researcher’s identity is its primary concern. The number of academic conferences and workshops they attended ranged from 0 to 14 with most of them having participated in at least one or two conferences.

Research Instruments
This section reports the instruments employed to collect the relevant data.

Questionnaire
A computer-based Likert-scale questionnaire was distributed in an electronic form to many English language faculty members from the University. Despite the continuous encouragement to respond, only 11 finally turned up. The questionnaire was later analyzed using SPSS and discussed in relation to the research questions, aims, theory and literature.
Interviews
To gather more data, several semi-structured interviews were conducted with several of the participants (five participants). Most of the interviewees were also among those who had already filled in the questionnaire. In addition, the conversations with these participants helped us dig deeper into the participants’ minds and experiences.

Research Procedures
Two instruments were used. The Google-formatted questionnaire was sent out to participants after obtaining their consent and ensuring freedom of withdrawal at any time during the process. The qualitative interviews were administered mostly face-to-face over cups of tea and coffee and were audio-taped. Appropriate analysis tools were used for both quantitative and qualitative instruments (SPSS for the former and coding, categorization, and thematic analysis methods for the latter).

Findings
This section presents and analyzes the findings of the two instruments used to collect the data. This includes the presentation of the participants’ responses to the questions/statements alongside the semi-structured interview results. Afterward, these findings will be discussed based on the questions posed in the study. The discussion of the results will relate to the literature review.

In what follows, the results of each item will be presented and analyzed in more detail:
Table 1. Researchers can in many ways present themselves in their research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researchers can in many ways present themselves in their research.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.32</td>
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</table>

In response to this statement, 90% of the participants agreed while 10% strongly agreed (100% altogether). It is reasonable to argue that researchers feel they have a voice to venture while writing research. This addresses (R.Q.3) although it may also address in various degrees the two other research questions. The details of this awareness of self-manifestation, presentation and representation (which will likewise be discussed further in the following responses and in the Discussion section) may not always be all clear or unambiguous to many participants. This latter aspect is interesting in its own right and has been discussed thoroughly in the theoretical framework/ literature section. In particular, the literature discusses the complex interplay of various factors contributing to the dynamics of identity and self-realization in research. This will,
in many ways, include power dynamics, intersubjectivity, language functions with regard to identity construction and the explanations offered by the theory of intersectionality. For instance, researchers seem to be aware of the fact that they can voice up their positions, thoughts, etc. in different ways such as using the stance features mentioned in the literature review alongside other features such as foregrounding, backgrounding, presupposing, using questions (Hewings & North, 2010; Milstein & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020), etc. Thus, participants in this study confirm that they do feel it is possible to demonstrate them in research.

Table 2. The researcher's identity (thoughts, positions, feelings, aspirations, likes, dislikes, etc.,) is part of the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher's identity (thoughts, positions, feelings, aspirations, likes, dislikes, etc.) is part of the research process.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.47</td>
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In response to this statement, (80%) of the participants agreed and (10%) strongly agreed, with this same percentage being true for neutral (around 10% neutral) alongside an SD of (0.47). Thus, again, participants feel that research is something thoughtful and which they can in some ways relate to our unique features and situations including aspirations, likes and dislikes. The response is more consistent with (R.Q.1 and R.Q. 2).

In addition, data from observation and interviews appear to confirm further this awareness on the part of the participants (as will be discussed later in the interview results section). These features can always be felt intertwined into the overall research process, perhaps appearing in some parts and stages clearer than in others. This awareness could be more explainable in terms of the philosophical complexity of the long-standing debate of the nature of the relationship between “structure” and “agency” (Duranti, 2004; Ivanič, 1998). Researchers may be more particularly aware of this in the Discussion and Conclusions sections of their works, for there seems to be more room for agency in these sections. In particular, they are not unaware that these sections require thoughtfulness, stating positions based on the findings, abstracting ideas out of the overall process, relating to theory and literature, etc.

Table 3. The more I feel I like the topic, the better the paper/thesis is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The more I feel I like the topic, the better</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.05</td>
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the paper/thesis is.

The significance of this question is that it assesses how the participants view the impact of researcher identification (the way he thinks the overall work represents themselves as academic-selves/agency). Identification is seen in this statement as crucial for the totality of the work quality and depth. The percentages of those who either agreed or strongly disagreed mount to 70% whilst 30% either disagreed or neutral. The result suggests participants’ awareness of the significance of ascertaining their research/academic-selfness. This seems to be more consistent with Q.1 although it is also relevant to Q.2, indicating, moreover, their existence and validity. However, the relatively high percentage of neutrals (27.3%) may suggest that traditional academic discourse, which rejects, ignores or does not recognize any agency presence in research, still has some influence on some of the participants in this study. Another possible reason is that the word “identification” may have been misunderstood by some participants to suggest too much identity or agency. If the latter is the case, then this should have been explained to the respondents or its meaning should have been discussed with them before or during the questionnaire administration.

Table 4. The more I feel I like the topic, the better the paper/thesis is

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tr>
<td>paper/thesis is.</td>
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The significance of this question lies in its ability to measure how the participants view the impact of the degree of the researcher-topic interaction or dialectics. It is meant to indicate the effect of “feeling/sensing the topic” aspect on the quality of the thesis drawing on the experience of the participants. As is clear from the table, 70% approved the statement (agreeing or strongly agreeing). There’s little doubt that the participants drew on their own experiences with the topics which they studied and saw for themselves the difference a good feeling towards the topic could make. The topic choice is the threshold of the researcher into the world of their research and it would, therefore, be reasonable to argue that it is where they start to connect with their investigation deeply. This will also be highlighted later by the findings of the interviews wherein many participants saw that the choice of the topic was where a researcher could find an ideal space to enact their agency.

Table 5. The best of my research works were the one(s), I felt I was more motivated and highly spirited to conduct

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>The best of my research works were the one(s), I</td>
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<td>felt I was more motivated and highly spirited to</td>
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</table>
The best of my research works, were the one(s) I felt I was more motivated and highly spirited to conduct

The statement evaluates how certain aspects of selfhood and identities could be exhibited in research works. This way the statement/question is more relevant to (R.Q. 2 & R.Q. 3). Being motivated and highly spirited to conduct a specific research project represents many aspects of researcher identity. Participants seem to be conscious of both self-manifestation and representation features on their research with a particular reference to the degree of motivation. These are understood to be multiple including abstract and concrete characteristics. The 60% of the participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing (40% being neutral) demonstrate this awareness of the importance of the topic-based inspiration of the researcher on the overall product of research. The finding casts light on the significance of motivation on the part of the researcher for the success of the research project, which in turn sheds light on the importance of motivation on researcher identity and agency.

Table 6. *I can express myself in my papers/thesis (positions, ideas, beliefs, etc.) in many ways*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can express myself in my papers/thesis (positions, ideas, beliefs, etc.) in many ways.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This particular statement/item assesses whether participants think they can delineate ‘agency’ aspects in their research and that the usually expected standards of research ‘structure’ do not or should not necessarily undermine the power of their energy. After all, researchers are human beings and their will, position, and spirit are present no matter traditional ‘objectivity’ assumptions incessantly attempt to suppress them. The item relates more to (R.Q. 3). However, the response to this statement/item seems to be rather hesitant or less sure than the responses to the rest of the statements (with 45.5% agreeing and strongly disagreeing and the same percentage going for the neutrals 45.5%). This neutrality or somewhat the hesitancy may be explained in different ways. But, in all, it could be the effect of being long exposed to the traditional research education marginalizing or at times ‘criminalising’ expressing ‘agency’ in research, to the point of even totally preventing the use of personal pronouns (we, our, I, me, my,
mine, etc.) which will be detailed later over again. This may suggest that “de/unlearning” may be needed to reduce the opposing force of this tradition (this will be taken up in more detail in the discussion).

Table 7. The worst/poorest studies/research projects I have done are the ones towards which I felt low spirit/emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The worst/poorest studies/research projects I have done are the ones towards which I felt low spirit/emotions.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to this item, 60% strongly agreed or agreed, while 40% either disagreed or did not know/neutral. The result provides more evidence for a role of the connection between the researcher and their work, a role of selfhood and identity features on the success or failure of research along with the importance of motivation or inspiration on the success or failure of the whole research project.

The low-spiritedness necessarily weakens the researcher’s bonds with their topic/research and thus attenuates the researcher’s identification towards their work. The result addresses (R.Qs 1 and 3) and suggests a positive response to both of them. It seems that the lack or lowness of spirit affects negatively the dialogism and communication between the researcher and the research which is why both Bakhtin’s Dialogism and Habermas’ Communicative Rationalism illuminate identity research.

Table 8. My own views, feeling, ideas, etc., affect my research work(s) negatively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My own views, feeling, ideas, etc., affect my research work(s) negatively.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The item aims to test if the participants/informants see their views, ideas and feelings as negatively affecting the quality of their research and the extent to which they see the constraints of that. In response, the percentages of those who rejected the statement were (30%) and those who accepted it were (30%), indicating equal concern on both sides. The swingers who could go both ways were 40%, suggesting in turn, they were not quite sure about the positive influence of expressing some kind of valid selfness in research, even though they generally and in most other
segments of the questionnaire have indeed shown approval regarding selfhood representation and identity in research.

Table 9. *My own views, feeling, ideas, etc., affect my research work(s) positively*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My own views, feeling, ideas, etc., affect my research work(s)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 70% who were positive about the statement clearly and significantly show the respondents’ awareness and positive attitude towards the importance of expressing their own takes, views, feelings, and ideas, no matter, the discourse constraints may be. Whereas the neutrals were 40% in response to the former statement/item, only 20% were neutral concerning the response to this statement/item even though the content is almost identical. Correspondingly, no respondents strongly disagreed with the statement/item, while 10% of them were of that position concerning the previous statement (the SD is lower for this statement {0.92} than for the previous one {0.99} indicating more reliability on the part of the former). This would raise several questions not only with respect to the somewhat different responses to what appears to be the same stimulus but also to the role of language in triggering these responses. The latter issue calls to attention the complex questions of meaning when viewed from the lens of the function of language as not only being a carrier of meaning but as part and parcel of meaning per se, of meaning-potential, meaning-negotiation and of ‘being’ through language (Gee, 2011). As such, word-choice does make a difference; the respondents were more favourable to the word “affect positively”, than to ‘affect negatively’, suggesting their mindset became more positive when the word ‘positively’ was mentioned than its antonym ‘negatively’. The functions of language as discussed in the literature and strategies such as ‘foregrounding’, ‘backgrounding’, presupposing, self-mentioning, etc., affect identity and agency manifestation/representation and the difference between the responses for the two instances appear to support that.

Table 10. *When reading or reviewing others’ studies, I often think the findings would have been explained differently had it been my own research*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When reading or reviewing others' studies, I often think the</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The statement/item measures how the respondents feel they can exercise their own agency in their research. In response, 40% were favourable to the statement/item, only 10% disagreed, whereas 50% were neutral (the overall data possibly suggests that the neutrality here is understood as going leftwards, more inclined to the agreeing side than the disagreeing one; while sometimes it may lean rightwards ‘disagreeing’ if the overall data suggests that). This percentage indicates the existence of researcher agency on the part of the respondents since they feel they can insert their own voices in academic writing via this feeling of being able to interpret the same results differently and venture their own conclusions from the same results. Creating space for oneself is a form of practicing agency; itself allowing for exhibiting identity in writing. Space creation is one of the major features of postprocess writing (Kalan, 2014) and which in fact attempts to challenge and go beyond the process-based approach, arguing for an approach of writing which can liberate and empower writers.

The following three tables present the findings in connection with the use of first-person pronouns in research. They will be analyzed and later discussed as regards their validity to the research questions and objectives to explore the participants’ thoughts towards the use of these pronouns in research articles coupled with the epistemological implications of this to the expression of identities, voice and agency.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use first person pronouns in reporting my research.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to this, 30% were positive, 10% neutral and 60% disagreed (and the fact that 10% strongly agreed while no one strongly disagreed is not insignificant for that matter). Thus, it could be concluded that the majority of participants disapproved of the use of first-person pronouns in research even though they generally appear to be more favourable about the liberation of researcher’s agency. There are two possible reasons for this discrepancy. First, the high percentage of those who are still reserved as regards the use of first person pronouns in research, could be, (as is mentioned before and will be tackled over again in the discussion of the interviews), consciously or unconsciously, under the effect of long traditional training with its highly negative stance against the use of first-person pronouns, as they were thought to undermine scientific objectivity. Epistemologically speaking, this is the legacy of the philosophy of positivism and behaviorism which dominated the world of academia for decades before the advent of the new perspectives of post-positivism, post-process writing and post-qualitative research which all refuted the traditional claims of ‘positivistic scientism’, paving the way for...
alternative more dynamic paradigms. Second, it is possible that some respondents have not seen any correlation between the use of first-person pronouns and the importance of liberating researchers’ agencies. The latter explanation is supported by some of the follow-up interviews in which some participants argued that they did not believe the existence of any connection. They virtually did not seem to understand the epistemological roots of the strict prohibition of first-person pronouns in research writing.

Table 12. Using first-person pronouns in research writing undermines the principle of objectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using first person pronouns in research writing, undermines the principle of objectivity.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result wherein 70% were positive about the statement concerning the use of first-person pronouns (I, We) in research writing, and not a single one disagreed, proves the validity of our interpretation that the respondents might not have seen a correlation between the use of first-person pronouns and expressing agency and selfhood. The percentage of those who were neutral (30%) is likewise indicative as it is even more significant than in the case of the previous statement (10%). The more substantial number of those who were hesitant/neutral appear to enhance our two interpretations mentioned previously and this will be touched on again.

Table 13. It is more appropriate in academic writing to use the personal pronoun “We” than “I”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is more appropriate in academic writing to use the first person pronoun “We” than “I”.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This item completes the two other items which aim to probe the respondents’ perception about the use of first-person pronouns in research. It is assumed that those who object to the use of first-person pronouns would more likely prefer the plural (We/Us/Our) to the singular (I/Me/My) on the basis that they would see the plural form (We) less ‘subjective’ than the singular (I). In response to this, 40% preferred the plural form, while 30% did not agree about the statement/item and 30% were wavering/not sure. The percentage of those favouring the (We)
was higher than those who did not. This fact again appears to enhance our primary interpretation considering the epistemological and foundational assumptions underpinning the respondents’ reservation or rejection of the use of first-person pronouns in research writing. Interestingly, however, this seems to evoke Duranti’s (2004) two concepts of what he calls the “inevitability of agency” and “the mitigation of agency”. The inevitability of agency (in line with the ever-present level of agency that he calls ‘ego-affirming agency’) proposes that agency is always there in language no matter we may try to conceal it. The “mitigation of agency” entails that speakers, by virtue of the grammatical systems per se, possess a wide range of linguistic choices of expressing a level of agency. Thus, respondents might have conceived the preference of using the plural (We)- in the position of the singular first-person pronoun (I)- as a way of mitigating agency.

Analysis of the Interviews

Seeking more data and more valid and reliable results, the questionnaire survey was further enhanced with interviews conducted with six of the participants/informants of those who were previously surveyed. Mixing data from different methods provides what is known as “inter-method reliability”. The semi-structured interviews attempted to explore more profoundly the researchers’ concepts, thoughts, ideas, feelings and representations of themselves, identities, voice and agency in their research articles and reports.

Over cups of tea/coffee, six faculty members of the English Departments of the University and who had already turned up for the questionnaire were interviewed. The aim was to amalgamate more data and to probe informants for more depth concerning researcher identity issues. The semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed with the research objectives, questions and theoretical underpinnings in mind. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, categorized, thematized and analyzed to find out if they support the findings from the other data, give new information or provide more depth for the issues under investigation.

The qualitative analysis design employed a mixture of thematic, grounded theory and interpretative methods as every single method has its own strengths and weaknesses and it was thought that it would be more appropriate to include a variety of epistemological approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lorelli, et al., 2017).

Discussion

This section discusses the results of the questionnaire and interview results and relates them to the research questions, theories and approaches of identities and the literature review.

Discussion of the Questionnaire and the Interview Results

As can be seen from the descriptive analysis in Appendix (A), and the detailed presentation and analyses of the results in Tables (1-13), in the Questionnaire Analysis section, the results, on the whole, clearly indicate a favourable response to the three research questions:

1. Do researchers’ identities manifest themselves up in the academic/research discourse of applied linguists and EFL scholars?
2. If so, in what ways can these identities and self-manifestations appear in the academic and research discourse of applied linguists and EFL scholars?

3. To what extent, if any, are applied linguists and EFL scholars/researchers aware that they represent themselves in their academic and research discourse/writing?

Responses to the 13 statements/items of the questionnaire, have, all in all, indicated that researchers manifest their selfhoods and voices in their research writing in many psycho-socio-linguistic and epistemological aspects. The results are in many ways congruent with what has been widely discussed in the literature about identity, agency and voice, the complexities and intricacies of objectivity and subjectivity, the epistemological implications of language functions and discourse markers, the dynamic nature of academic discourse, etc., (e.g. Awadelkarim, 2021; Bhabha, 1994; Bazzzul, 2014; Duranti, 2004; Gee, 2011; Hewings & North, 2010; Hyland, 2002; Olmos-López & Sunderland, 2014; Swales, 2004; Tano, 2019).

Furthermore, and as is clear from the analysis section, responses to the pertinent statements/questions suggest that most of the participants appear to be aware of identity and self-demonstration, stressing certain areas of research articles/reports where they feel they could comfortably voice up their ideas and delineate their agencies/selfhoods (see responses for statements/items from one to seven+10). Nonetheless, both the questionnaire findings and the interview results exhibit those respondents were not fully conscious of the complexity of the process of selfhood/identity representation in research articles. This is somehow evident from the responses dealing with the use of first-person pronouns (see statements/items 11, 12 & 13). In these responses, participants’ reservation or rejection of the use of first-person pronouns in research articles, believing this may undermine ‘objectivity’, is interpretable in many possible ways. They did not seem to be fully aware of the importance of using these pronouns despite claiming that expressing voice liberates researcher’s agency/identity. One possible interpretation, as has been noted previously, is the influence of traditional research literacy. This influence could also possibly explain the relatively high percentage (40%) of the swingers in response to statement/item No (8) (My own views, feeling, ideas, etc., affect my research work negatively(s). To reduce the influence of traditional pedagogy, we have propounded a process of de/unlearning. The dynamics of this de/unlearning will create the possibility of consciously forgetting and removing ineffective or inadequate learning containing outdated or faulty ideas (Awadelkarim, 2021). This way, researchers become open up to new knowledge and new paradigms.

The interview results outlined in the table in Appendix (B) in many ways confirm the results of the questionnaire. Not only that, but the interviews, moreover, added more depth to the exploration of the complexity of researcher identity and the relationship between the researcher and their research. In addition, and as the table demonstrates, the interviews provide valuable information in the form of linguistic data showing exactly how participants think concerning the relevant issues. An abundant amount of data suggests that participants experienced and were
aware of various aspects of researcher identity, agency and self-realization. As shown in detail in Appendix (B), the quotes from the interviewees confirm that respondents’ identities were represented in their research discourse (RQ 1); that these identities and self-externalisations might be demonstrated in a variety of ways including some language functions and discourse markers (see Jakobson’s model, 1961 and Hyland, 2002) (R.Q. 2); that the respondents were in many ways aware of their identities delineated in research, significantly in research sections such as Discussion, Conclusions and the Literature Review (R.Q. 3). This awareness, however, could only be partial, as the data from both the questionnaire and the interviews display that respondents could not fully explain many research complexities and intricacies. Overall, the three research questions were given more confirmation and consolidation by the interviews.

Additionally, Interview data provided significant information. On the one hand, it enhanced most of the results of the questionnaire, besides providing more information that could interpret some of the complexities arising from some other results, on the other. Regarding supporting the questionnaire results, the qualitative analysis reveals primarily that the interviewees not only believe that researcher identity and agency are essential in research but also discussed the many ways in which identity features and characteristics could manifest and develop in research writing.

About some issues, such as the use of personal pronouns, the interview data was broadly consistent with that of the questionnaire. Except for one participant, they more or less expressed reservations concerning using the first person pronouns in research papers. However, even for those who somewhat rejected the use of first-person pronouns in research writing, there seemed to be, in their belief, no relation between these pronouns and the importance of displaying identity (the triangulation of both types of data suggests that). However, language functions as discussed in the literature interplay many with identity issues (e.g. as Hyland, 2003 has noted first person pronouns are markers of self-mentioning). This is consistent with what Olmoz-Lopez (2019) observes about authorial identity as a way of demonstrating the writer’s academic being and a mechanism of self-positioning into the academic community. What is more, participants also noted the influence of their M.A. and Ph.D. supervisors who mostly insisted they avoided these pronouns to prevent bias (in the supervisors’ perspective). The complexity of communication between Ph.D. supervisors/co-supervisors and supervisees has been thoroughly and interestingly investigated by Olmos-López and Sunderland (2014) (though their focus was on co-supervision, their findings are still relevant here). This is generally congruent with the inherent assumption throughout this study that traditional research education is flawed as regards understanding the relevance, value and force of researcher identity. Consequently, the notion of un/delearning propounded in the discussion of the questionnaire results is arguably validated by the interview data.
The interview data, likewise, confirms the findings of the questionnaire concerning the sections of the research articles where they feel they can best manifest their identities, voices and selfhoods. Distinctively, the data from both the questionnaire and the conversations suggested the “Conclusions” section as the space most conducive for voice expression. This is strikingly congruent, in many respects, with the findings of Olmos-Lopez (2013, 2014, 2015) who investigated the ‘Conclusions’ as a genre of academic writing in its own right. Similarly, interview results confirmed and provided more explanation regarding the complex epistemological issue of objectivity and subjectivity representations in research writing. Whereas the data of the questionnaire data in this particular issue could somehow tend to be ambiguous or interpretable in several ways, the conversations with the participants made it clear that “you cannot avoid subjectivity in research”, admitting that “It is hard for the researcher to balance between objectivity and subjectivity”, as one participant plainly put it. Pertinently, the conversations uncovered that those who opposed the use of first-person pronouns, in fact, maintained that “there is no connection between expressing voice and personal pronouns” in the words of another participant.

Conclusion
This study aimed to explore the issue of researcher identity in terms of awareness, self-manifestations and implications (which is to our knowledge, the first of its kind in the context of this study). The subjects were a group of applied linguists and EFL scholars teaching and researching at the English Department, College of Education, Majmaah University. The probe attempted to examine their viewpoints and attitudes regarding their identities as researchers, how they manifest as human beings?, in what ways, if any, are these identities and agencies represented in research texts?, and if they are aware of the process of identification in research. The study of identity and agency in research has recently been notable philosophically, linguistically and pedagogically.

The results of this study have in many ways enhanced the ongoing efforts in all these aspects. Philosophically, it sheds light on the epistemological roots of researching the interplay and interrelationships between the self and scientific inquiry, adding to the growing interest in the long-standing thorny issue of objectivity and subjectivity in research discourse/writing. It could also illuminate the nature of research, the role of language in the process of humanization and subjectivation (linguistically and philosophically, the term subjectivation applies when language is used to express the subject’s attitudes or viewpoints) of research, and can add to the growing literature of what has been known as the “hard problem of consciousness” (the difficulty of finding a valid correlation between experiencing consciousness and its physical/material roots, such experiencing voice/agency and the concrete ways of examining such an experience) since the seminal work of Chalmers (1995). Pedagogically, exploring researcher identity in the field of linguistics and applied linguistics proved valuable to researchers, teachers and learners. In particular, the combined mixed data of this study suggested that the subjects proved aware of
both the existence and significance of identity/agency/voice in research and that these agency representations and self-manifestations take many forms, and that these are underscored by many socio-cognitive-linguistic factors. These sociocultural underpinnings take their presumably best forms in the role of traditional research education in limiting the possibility of voicing researchers’ identities and agencies, hence stressing as discussed throughout this study, the need for un/de-learning to remove some of the negative consequences of traditional education (see the discussion on the use of first-person pronouns). The cognitive and linguistic bedrock of the researcher’s self-manifestation can be exemplified by the impact of the complexity of the interplay between language functions and the multiple ways in which researchers connect with their research, how they identity with their topic and the different sections of their research articles or reports.

**Limitations**

The study has conceivably been limited by two significant factors:

First, the number of participants in the questionnaire (11) may have limited the generalisability of the findings to other contexts. However, judging by the criterion of the similarity of the participants’ characteristics concerning the population of the study and its setting, it is reasonable to argue that the limitation is somewhat mitigated.

Second, the study has also been limited by that its findings were derived from the opinions, reflections and perceptions of the participants and did not include an examination of some of the participants’ research articles. Such an investigation of some research articles, would have added to the validity and reliability of the findings.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the discussion and conclusion, the recommendations of this study can be summed up in:

Future researchers are recommended to replicate the study but combining the two instruments of the questionnaire and the interviews with the method of content analysis (using text and discourse analysis of selected research articles). A larger sample can also produce valuable and more valid results in some other Arab or World contexts. Researchers may also shed more light on some subtle questions about the interrelationships between the ways identities are created, demonstrated and negotiated in research discourses, and the degree of the excellence of these articles (to look for possible correlations between things like voice, agency and self-esteem and research excellence).

Another point to consider in the recommendations, is what the conclusions entail about the need for a rethinking about the current research education in the Arab World and many other parts of the world where research education and training still, in many ways, suppress or
discourage identity, voice and agency expression (such as, for instance the rejection of the use of first-person pronouns in research articles/reports).

Acknowledgements
Many people contributed to this paper. In particular, I am greatly indebted to my colleagues of Majmaah University, College of Education, Department of English, who not only generously filled in the electronic questionnaire forms and sent them back to me, but also agreed to be interviewed and endured my insatiable quest for more information about research and identity issues. I am also grateful to many other people inside and outside the university for providing invaluable help of various sorts.

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References


Appendices
Appendix (A)

Questionnaire Descriptive Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Awadelkarim

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519
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Researchers can in many ways present themselves in their research.</td>
<td>10% 90% 0% 0% 0% 1.9 0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The researcher's identity (thoughts, positions, feelings, aspirations, likes, dislikes, etc.) is part of the research process.</td>
<td>10% 80% 10% 0% 0% 2.0 0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The more the researcher identifies with their work, the better and the more profound the work will be.</td>
<td>30% 20% 30% 20% 0% 2.4 1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The more I feel I like the topic, the better the paper/thesis is.</td>
<td>30% 40% 20% 10% 0% 2.0 1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The best of my research works, were the one(s), I felt I was more motivated and highly spirited to conduct.</td>
<td>50% 10% 40% 0% 0% 1.9 0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I can express myself in my papers/thesis (positions, ideas, beliefs, etc.) in many ways.</td>
<td>20% 30% 50% 0% 0% 2.3 0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The worst/poorest studies/research projects I have done, are the ones towards</td>
<td>20% 40% 30% 10% 0% 2.3 0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
which I felt low spirit/emotions.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>My own views, feeling, ideas, etc., affect my research work(s) negatively.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>My own views, feeling, ideas, etc., affect my research work(s) positively.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>When reading or reviewing others' studies, I often think the findings would have been explained differently, had it been my own research.</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I use first-person pronouns in reporting my research.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Using first-person pronouns in research writing, undermines the principle of objectivity.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>It is more appropriate in academic writing to use the first-person pronoun “We” than “I”.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Appendix (B)

The Results of the Interviews (Thematic Analysis)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Examples (Quotes from participants highlighting the themes/ subthemes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher identity and agency</td>
<td>Voice, emotional connection, self-realisation, ideology, etc.</td>
<td>Four participants</td>
<td>“You need to vary voice expression words such as the use of hedges.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The relationship is complex...sometimes the researcher finds himself in research more than in teaching”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“There is a correlation between research and researcher identity...there is personal voice…it shows ideology...researcher identity is reflected by the research work.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“At times you may not like your research”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sections/areas of the research where identity, voice and selfness are more likely to appear.</td>
<td>Discussion/Interpretation, Conclusion, Recommendation, Methodology</td>
<td>Five participants</td>
<td>“In the discussion of the findings...you can put your own idea...your opinion about what has emerged from this research.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I can express my voice [in my research].”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I like my thesis on Schema...it overwhelmed me emotionally and I felt really excited [doing it].”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The conclusion is actually the voice of the researcher.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Two participants</td>
<td>“The discussion of the results usually reflects the researcher's mindset, identity, knowledge, motivation, insight, etc. &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mentioned Methodology</td>
<td>“Right at the conclusion I might express my views.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>along with the above-mentioned sections.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Objectivity vs. Subjectivity</td>
<td>Epistemological aspects of approaching the topic, awareness of the difficulty of balancing objectivity and subjectivity aspects,</td>
<td>Five participants</td>
<td>“You cannot avoid subjectivity in research.”</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Personal feeling and freedom is part of the research work...it cannot</td>
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<p>| Arab World English Journal | ISSN: 2229-9327 | <a href="http://www.awej.org">www.awej.org</a> | 522 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Examples (Quotes from participants highlighting the themes and subthemes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Researcher identity and agency            | Voice, emotional connection, self-realisation, ideology, etc. | Four participants | “You need to vary voice expression words such as the use of hedges.”  
“The relationship is complex…sometimes the researcher finds himself in research more than in teaching.”  
“There is a correlation between research and researcher identity..there is personal voice…it shows ideology..researcher identity is reflected by the research work.”  
“At times, you may not like your research.” |
| Sections/areas of the research where identity, voice | Discussion/Interpretation, Conclusion, Recommendation, Methodology | Five participants mentioned | Discussion, Conclusion and  
“The findings discussion..you can put your own idea…your opinion about what has
and selfness are more likely to appear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Two participants mentioned Methodology along with the above-mentioned sections.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>emerged from this research.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I can express my voice [in my research].”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I like my thesis on Schema…it overwhelmed me emotionally and I felt really excited [doing it].”</td>
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<td>“The conclusion is actually the voice of the researcher.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“The discussion of the results usually reflects the researcher's mindset, identity, knowledge, motivation, insight, etc.&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Right at the conclusion I might express my views.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I like methodology also…it is dynamic..you can choose which instrument…even in statistics you have got mental freedom in subjective elements.”</td>
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Drama-Based Approach in English Language Teaching

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Faculty of Literature, Languages and Arts.
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Abstract
The present study investigates the benefits of implementing drama techniques in English language teaching. It also focuses on the means and strategies of creating a learner-centered classroom to enhance English as Foreign Language learners’ communication skills. Two dramatic techniques used in the research are exploiting a scripted play and improvisation. Teacher-researcher conducted a qualitative research method through a case study of First-Year Master Students of English Literature and Civilization studying English as a foreign language in Dr. Moulat Tahar University of Saida, Algeria. The present study reveals the positive impact of teaching English through drama on student’s physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. It sheds light on the method of putting learners in authentic situations to help them discover their hidden creativity and overcome their fears. In addition to promoting their sense of collaboration, including discussion, negotiation, and performance.

Keywords: Drama, exploiting a scripted play, improvisation, learner-centered method, teaching English as a foreign language

Cite as: Bessadet, L. (2022). Drama-Based Approach in English Language Teaching. Arab World English Journal, 13 (1) 525-533. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no1.34
Introduction

One of the significant roles a teacher of English may perform is to teach literature in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context as a means of learning. Teachers must be aware of the various benefits a literary text may provide in the language classroom if it is well-explored. Reading literature enables students to identify, analyze, interpret and describe the critical ideas, values, and themes that appear in the text. It also helps to understand the way these ideas and themes inform and affect culture and society of both now and the past, the fact that develops students' character and emotional maturity. In this context, Hill (1986) notes, “one of the main benefits of literature is that it acts as a stimulus that ignites interest and motivates the student by involving them on a personal, emotional level.” (p. 9)

Exploring literary texts in English Language Teaching (ELT) provides an opportunity to put language into context whereby grammar rules, phrases, vocabulary already learned can be explored, and at the same time, new words are discovered. As a result, student’s ability to read in English improves with a good understanding and reflection over texts from different perspectives. On the other hand, student’s perception of the world around them matures through which they gain insight and develop a sense of tolerance. When students are involved personally and emotionally, they become motivated and interested in their learning process. This, in turn, contributes to their personal and cognitive development. Moreover, one of the fundamental aims of using literary texts in the language classroom is to make students transcend the boundaries of a teacher-centered classroom and become autonomous learners.

Encouraging students to read literary texts in the language classroom promotes the psycholinguistic aspect of language learning as it focuses on form and discourse processing skills and improves vocabulary expansion and reading skills (Hall, 2005). Literature in language teaching does not only improve the linguistic skills, but also encourages the communicative skills for it provides learners with genuine and enjoyable materials. In his article entitled The Role of Literature and Culture in English Language Teaching, Cruz (2010) states, “literature enhances ELT through elements such as authentic material, language in use, and aesthetic representation of the spoken language, as well as language and cultural enrichment.” (p. 1)

Of all other forms of literature, drama can be the shorter path that leads the teacher towards the goal of developing student’s receptive and productive skills, mainly communication skills. “Drama provides an authentic arena for natural language use in real situations with an emphasis on reciprocal, synchronized, unpredictable audience interactions.” (Beatty, 2015, p. 30) For this reason, the present study emphasizes the following research questions:

➢ Can drama be used as a learning instrument of the English language?
➢ To what extent the use of drama techniques helps students overcome their fears of communicating their ideas in front of an audience.

In Search of a Learner-Centered Classroom

New methods of teaching English often accentuate the development of learner’s psycholinguistic and communicative skills. EFL learners usually fear the challenge of speaking formally in front of an audience. Nevertheless, teachers can help reduce such fears by maintaining a friendly atmosphere in the class, encouraging students to engage in peers
communicative tasks and then in increasingly more prominent groups. “Students can also practice presenting information, answering questions, and holding group discussions” (Dwi Astuti, 2016, p. 53). Implementing literature in the language classroom and mainly “drama texts promotes a learner-centered classroom practice, which enables learners to perceive, think, act and interact during the learning process instead of being passive receivers of knowledge”. (Fleming, 2006, p. 97)

According to the American Psychological Association (1997), the learning process is based on a set of principles, which entails:

- Learning is influenced by social interactions and interpersonal relations.
- What and how much is learned is influenced by the learner’s motivation. Motivation to learn, in turn, is influenced by the individual’s emotional states, beliefs, interests and goals, and habits of thinking.
- Successful learners can reflect on how they think, learn, and set practical learning or performance goals.

The set of principles stated above show how the teacher-student and student-student interpersonal relations and interactions highly contribute in creating a practical learning atmosphere that largely depends on creativity and active learning.

Literature Review

Throughout history, as Landy (1982) notes, drama occurred when a community would gather for a ceremonial purpose: to assure a good hunt, an ample rainfall, or a long life to a new leader. The dramatic elements included chanting, dancing, storytelling, and dressing up in the costumes and masks of gods or animals. However, in the developmental history of a human being, drama becomes a natural means of learning. In the same vein, Thompson and Evans (2005) point out that drama is a multi-sensory tool, which combines listening, speaking, thinking, exploration and use of the immediate environment, and the development of physical control.

When drama is used as a teaching method in the sense of being part of the eclectic approach to language teaching, it can become a central aid in acquiring communicative competence (Davies, 1990). According to Sariçoban (2004),

Drama raises the students’ awareness of the target language and culture. Learners should make use of drama to improve their comprehension of life experiences, reflect on particular circumstances and make sense of their extra linguistic world in a deeper way. (p. 15)

On the other hand, Dwi Astuti (2016) views that a drama-oriented language classroom allows frequent classroom presentations and discussions, which enable teachers to diagnose and remedy problems. Practicing oral presentations in these ways can lessen students’ anxieties while, helping them to learn the subject matter of the lesson. Kao, Carkin and Hsu (2011) reported that:

During the process of building the drama context, EFL learners had the chance to evaluate and practice their listening and speaking skills critically. They claimed that
Drama is a tool with the potential to engage English FL learners and promote their oral proficiency. (p. 501)

Accordingly, Susan Holden (1982) suggests the following five-point plan for integrating drama activities into the lesson:

- The teacher presents the idea, theme, or problem to the students, organizing any preliminary work ensuring that the students know precisely what to do.
- Students discuss in groups what and exactly how they will do the task.
- Students experiment in groups with various interpretations until they are satisfied with one.
- Students may show their interpretation or solution to another group.
- Students may also discuss their solutions in groups or with the rest of the class. This discussion can serve as a form of assessment for the students of their work.

Drama is a specific action to make the learning process more active, exciting, communicative, and contextual. Drama techniques refer to all those strategies that accompany a dramatic discourse to help a better understanding and a better performance of a text. Acting is a way of learning by experience and “Drama techniques integrate body, mind, and emotions and motivate students to use their personalities and experiences as resources for language production” (Maley & Duff, 1978, p. 6-7). In the language classroom, the teacher can apply different drama techniques such as role-played, simulation, mime, improvisation, frozen image building, and scripted plays.

![Drama Techniques for EFL Learning](adopted from Mosaddaq & Tahani, 2021, p. 677)

Most importantly, drama techniques are valuable means to strengthen students’ active involvement in the learning process. It involves excitement, fun, and laughter into the language classroom and encourages cooperation and collaboration in a creative context. Undertaking this method, puts students into real-life discourse models that will assimilate through imitation and performance.
Research Methodology

Participants of the Study

Participants of the study were twenty students of First-Year Master of English Literature and Civilization studying English as a foreign language at the department of English Language and Literature, Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida, Algeria. The period conducted for the research study was three weeks (two sessions per week). Students were divided into four groups, five students in each group playing different functions according to the type of the task assigned.

Instruments of the Study

The dramatic text used in the present research study was -scene one- from *Riders to the Sea* (1905), a play written by the famous Irish playwright J.M Synge. It is a one-act play with one setting and soft stage directions the fact, which encourages the participants to work on the play easily. The dramatic text was selected because of its specific and symbolic language, which increased students challenge to perform it.

Research Procedure

Drama can be easily implemented in the English language syllabus because of its relevance. It creates a “chance to increase awareness of paralinguistic features, linguistic accessibility, intrinsic interest, practicability in terms of lesson time, student numbers and space, and the possibility of using other dramatic activities in the future, thereby providing continuity” (Davies, 1990, p. 89). “Regularly conducted activities (i.e., drama/theater training and performance) have the potency to desensitize students’ speaking anxiety by allowing them to constantly explore and experience the target language in various meaningful, realistic contexts.” (Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson & Soler, 2002, p. 75)

Nevertheless, before maintaining any drama activity in the language classroom, the teacher has to be well prepared before the lesson gets underway. Lesson objectives have to be settled beforehand, and the text should be selected according to students linguistic competencies and interests. Applying drama in the language classroom can be achieved through different drama activities such as *exploiting a scripted play* and improvisation.

Exploiting a Scripted Play

Before deciding on the selected script, the teacher has to check the accessibility of the language in terms of its relevance to the learners’ needs and interest. “To extract the most out of a play, work on it should be approached in stages. Text (script) analysis, rehearsal, and performance”. (Davies, 1990, p. 94)

The task was achieved over three weeks (two sessions a week). Students were arranged in the form of groups where the teacher functions as a facilitator. As an initial step, students were asked to read the first scene of the play *Riders to the Sea* carefully to familiarize themselves with the text by reading it at least three times. The teacher then discussed the text with the class in the form of debate before assigning the roles. Language in the selected play was poetic with a strong emphasis on the Irish dialect, therefore, the teacher asked students to read it aloud as a kind of rehearsal. The teacher’s aim was to draw students attention to the importance of the language used in the play commenting on different devices such as mood, register, diction, and physical atmosphere.
In the second week, students were eager to start performing the play. As a first step, students were divided into groups of five, two groups were meant to perform the first part of the scene, and the remaining two groups chose the second. The teacher asked students to discuss the setting and characters in detail, select their roles, and start rehearsing the play. At this step, a rehearsal is crucial for a better mastering of the language, mainly in terms of intonation (paralanguage) and non-verbal language (body language). After two weeks of working on the scripted play, students reached the last stage of the lesson, which is performance. Directly after that, a small discussion was held to comment and evaluate the way students performed.

**Major Findings**

Dealing with drama in an EFL context was a big challenge for the teacher. In addition to the complexity of text and performance techniques, Algerian students lacked the potential to be exposed to a theatre context; this fact comes back to socio-cultural reasons. However, using theatre as a means to learn the English language and discover its aesthetic values helped students transcend their fears of expressing themselves in front of an audience. Students were highly involved in the task throughout its three stages, showing a great interest in performing their roles and communicating their ideas. After achieving the objectives of the lesson, students were no more passive learners. They could overcome their hesitation to intervene in class discussion, communicating with their peers, and enjoying team working.

**Improvisation**

Improvisation is another salient drama technique that can be used in English teaching, in which learners are presented to a situation and challenged to respond to it. Students can create their script and agree on developing its idea and shaping its structure, but without any speech construction, the acting must be spontaneous and improvised. “Thoughts and feelings are emphasized in improvisation, in which learners create people and relationships by acting out situations using speech and movement, but without a preconceived plan” (Davies, 1990, p. 94). What is enjoyed in this drama activity is that students are free of being dependent upon a script that should be memorized.

The task was achieved over three weeks (two sessions per week). After being exposed to drama text studying its norms and techniques in the former activity, students now were required to write and produce their script that should be performed in an improvised way. The topic can be an imitation of the original script *Riders to the Sea* or an imaginary ending of the play. The activity helped students focus on the register, vocabulary in context, and fluency, in addition to their collaboration and creativity.

Students worked in groups where the teacher played the role of a facilitator and supervisor only. At first, the teacher read the first scene of the play. After that, students were divided into four groups of five students functioning as different members: a reader of the text, a writer of the script, a dictionary checker for vocabulary, an editor (revision and correction), and a script designer (acting and body language).
Since students were going to think of different endings, the teacher asked them to provide a story that involved several characters so that all students could act out those characters. As a final step of the lesson, students started rehearsals for better and more convenient acting and performed their improvised plays.

**Major Findings**

In the initial steps of the lesson, students showed a great sense of collaboration to formulate their creative idea of the improvised play. Later and during the day of performance, some students were anxious because there was no script to rely on while acting. Nonetheless, once students began their performance of the improvised plays, their anxiety decreased, and they could create a wonderful sense of cooperation and creativity that sometimes lead to funny situations and humor. The fact that reduced stress and heightened motivation. The overall aim of this type of teamwork is to evolve students’ communication skills through working together, sharing ideas and decision-making, and organizing dramatic statements.

The following table represents significant achievements of both applied drama activities in the case study:

**Table 1. Learning Achievements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
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</table>
| Twenty (20) Master Students of English Literature & Civilization | ・Reading aloud the dramatic text.  
・Writing the script.  
・Communicating verbal and non-verbal language during performance.  
・Listening to one another. |
• Improving self-esteem, critical thinking, and autonomous learning.

Results Discussion
Using drama as a learning instrument to teach the English language displays the mutual relationship between cognitive and affective aspects of language learning relating thinking with feelings. By experiencing the language through operation, learners will be practicing the target language and para-language aspects of communication bringing together both mind and body. The extra linguistic world of drama also helps students discover new cultures and new people allowing more tolerance and understanding of life. Moreover, classroom presentations and group discussions promote oral proficiency and enable teachers to be closer to their students for a better diagnosing of problems. When students communicate their ideas and express their opinions and feelings without any hesitation, they learn how to solve problems and develop their self-confidence, which leads to greater adaptability in life.

Conclusion
Drama techniques can be used as practical learning tools in ELT if they are well structured and explored. Drama takes the learner beyond the matrix of the learning environment to reach the horizon of creativity and universality. Putting learners inside authentic situations unveil their hidden creativity and allow them to transcend their fears of expressing themselves in front of others. Drama in ELT puts language into context; it gives learners the experience of success in real-life situations, and supplies them with confidence to deal with the world outside the classroom. In other words, if a drama activity is appropriately done, it creates a learner-centered classroom where the learner rather than the language or the teacher is at the center of the learning process. Dramatic activities provide EFL learners with paralanguage practices and lead them towards fluency, maturity, motivation, physical involvement, in addition to interpersonal relations. Sharing the classroom responsibility with learners showing them their function as a major pole of the learning environment helps them improve themselves as individuals and make them enjoy and appreciate their learning process. Eventually, the whole study was a good opportunity for the teacher-researcher to draw his students’ attention to the artistic and aesthetic appreciation of theatre.

About the Author:
Dr. Latéfa BESSADET is a Senior Lecturer at Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida, Algeria. She has taught English at the Department of English Language and Literature since 2012, including teaching literature, culture, and academic writing. Her research areas are modern and post-modern American literature, didactics, and research methodology.

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Challenges of Short Sentence Writing Encountered by First-Year Saudi EFL Undergraduate Students

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Abstract
This paper is set up to outline the most common challenges in writing short sentences encountered by the first-year students at the English language departments at Al-Baha University campuses. The study is considered necessary because it raises the awareness of both students and instructors to improve their sentence writing. A mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative) was used to collect the data using questionnaires and interviews. Approximately 122 students who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL), (%50.4 females and %49.6 males), together with 30 EFL instructors (15 males and 15 females) who were randomly selected. The paper addresses three questions. They are: 1) What common challenges do students face when writing short sentences?; 2) What are the most frequent challenging short sentence components among the students?; and 3) What are the differences between male and female students regarding difficulties in writing short sentences?. The study found significant challenges in constructing short sentences, distinguishing between active and passive voice, and using conjunctions, punctuation, quantifiers, and appropriate auxiliary verbs. Additionally, students encountered difficulties in building short sentences. Moreover, the study revealed that a high percentage of students have very low English writing skills practice. To overcome any obstacles and push students forward in their learning later, this study highly recommended that EFL instructors should pay more attention to the development of writing skills. Thus, extra written activities and peer assessment must be granted to students in writing short sentences. Moreover, more research should be done to explore and evaluate the most prevalent problems and barriers that first-year students encounter using written samples and paperwork.

Keywords: EFL students, first-year students, sentence structure, short sentences, writing challenges, writing skill

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Introduction

Out of the four essential skills that make up a language, writing is an important aspect that should be mandatory to guarantee proficiency (Brown, 2000; Ikeda, 2000). For academics, having good writing skills is a necessity. That being considered, writing in English has brought about difficulties for most Second Language Learners (SLLs) in the aspect of writing well-structured paragraphs. Students understand that writing, being productive, and having it as a skill helps one come up with well-articulated sentences and connect them in a given order. Second language learners find it challenging to develop complete sentences, considering how complex the construction of a sentence maybe for them. Because of this, they fall back towards adopting different subskills and strategies pertaining to the language in question. It should also be noted that writing is a complex procedure since the writer must move repeatedly backward and forward through their ideas and the written texts (Harris & Cunningham, 1996). A two-way interaction is established between the learner and the text, and thus, knowledge is developed as the learner comes up with written texts (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

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

According to Bryson (2020), short sentence structuring decides how the significant components are placed together, from punctuation to word order, while still adhering to simple word order laws. There are several other considerations to address when writing correctly constructed sentences. Moreover, Bryson went on to say that there have been two common grammar and sentence structure mistakes:

a) Once incorrect punctuation is used to link different portions of a sentence, run-on sentences happen.

b) Sentence fragments are sentences that have no elements needed to establish a comprehensive sentence that makes sense.

The truth is that learners create a list of common errors despite having functional theoretical grammatical skills and can recognize such mistakes if they are attentive enough to do so. Datchuk and Kubina (2013) concluded that it does not seem unusual when the first-year students experience difficulties in writing since their first language substantially impacts second-language learning. English has become one of the main classes and essential in university curricula (Demirezen, 2012). Students are expected to learn English compulsively in the first and second semesters in Saudi universities (mainly in preparatory year). Thus, there are issues in the structuring of English short sentences. The ambiguity in English written form by these students has created a misunderstanding in their writings (Al Fadda, 2012). A wrongly written sentence makes a misinterpretation of the intended message that is to be conveyed. Therefore, this study is very significant in adhering and improving the writing performance of students, and helps instructors to be aware of the common errors that occur in students’ writings.
This study aims to outline and investigate common writing problems associated with short sentence construction for the first-year English-major undergraduate students. Additionally, the purpose of this study is to increase instructors' awareness of students' challenges in writing well-structured sentences. Therefore, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1) **What common challenges do students face when writing short sentences?**
2) **What are the most frequent challenging short sentence components among the students?**
3) **What are the differences between male and female students regarding difficulties in writing short sentences?**

**Literature Review**

**Previous Studies Addressing Challenges in Sentence Construction**

Ahmed (2010) investigated the institutional issues that Egyptian students face when writing in English. Excessive usage of coordinate sentences and misapplication of topic sentences are examples of these issues. According to the findings of this study, "Egyptian students struggle with the use of cataphoric and anaphoric references, ellipsis, substitution, and genre-related organizational ties" (p. 213). Lack of drive, self-confidence, and writing nervousness are also issues for Egyptian ESL students. Additionally, Yemez and Dikilitaş (2022) researched the difficulties that Arab students face when writing a well-developed paragraph in English. He mentioned that individuals should fill the gap between these challenges such as content quality, organization, intent, audience, and vocabulary. Moreover, Yemez & Dikilitaş (2022) discovered that students write clauses that do not adhere to the punctuation and sentence structures. According to the researcher, simple, compound, and complex sentences present another challenge for ESL learners. Demirezen (2012) investigated the frameworks that cause problems in simple sentences for Turkish university students. The researcher has explained the fundamental elements of a simple sentence and its various patterns. As per the research, a simple extended sentence, defined as double or triple structures in subjects, verbs, and objects, is a source of difficulty for Turkish students. According to the research scientist, double predicates in a simple sentence also confuse students. The primary emphasis of this research is on the neglected and underutilized structures known as simple sentences with extended phrasal elements, as defined by the researcher.

**Sentence Structure**

Sentence structure governs how various segments of a sentence are placed together from punctuation to word order. In addition to upholding simple word order guidelines, there are several other factors to consider when writing accurately and precisely constructed sentences (Malaca-Sistoza, 2016). Alduais (2012) stated that there had been two prevalent sentence construction errors. First, run-on sentences are formed by using incorrect exclamation marks to connect various sections of a sentence. The second issue is sentence fragments, which lack the required components to create a complete, coherent sentence. According to Al-Seghayer (2014), sentence form is influenced by more than just grammar; it is also influenced by style and rhythm. Several sentence lengths and structures are used in effective academic writing. Excessive long sentences can be frustrating for readers, but too many concise sentences can render the text sound choppy and incoherent.
Run-on Sentences
Ur Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) defined an independent clause as a string of words that can stand alone to function as a complete sentence and is associated with several methods. However, run-on sentences come into view as they are associated and missing correct punctuation. Thus, they occur due to grammatical errors rather than length; short sentences are involved too (Gundel, 1981; Tauguchi, 2006).

Sentence Fragments
In Adewusi's study (2021), a fragment sentence is described as a collection of words that do not have all the components that compose grammatically correct sentence. A subject and a predicate are two primary components that comprise a string of words to create a sentence. Murray and Karcher (2000) suggest that even though sentence fragments are primarily used in style by journalists for creative writing, they seldom apply in sentence construction in academic or any other form of formal writing. Below are examples of issues with sentence fragments.

Missing Predicate
According to Yemez and Dikilitaş (2022), a typical simple example of a sentence fragment is when a sentence has no main verb. Noun phrases are not like a sentence to be grammatically correct, thus it requires a predicate. For example:

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

Dependent Clause
According to Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016), even though a dependent clause does not fully express a comprehensive idea, it typically contains subject and predicate. However, when added to an independent clause, it can be considered as a complete sentence. Subordinating conjunctions like ‘when, after, because, while, since, if, or although’ are used to form dependent clauses, but when they were found at the beginning, then the clause will change to a dependent clause (Elander, Harrington, Norton, Robinson, & Reddy; 2006).

Misuse of Present Participle
A present participle is known as a type of verb that ends in ‘ing’ form (e.g., stretching, walking, and eating). However, there are instances where present/past is used instead (Hameed, 2016). A progressive verb can show no grammatical coherence, as is shown before a predicate.

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

Having short sentences is good since they are more transparent and more readable. However, excessive short sentences can make the written work appear choppy, disjointed, and repetitive (Bryson, 2021). For example:

**Incorrect:** The assignment was marked on the first day. The results were also out within a week. The results were posted at 12 noon. This will be done for all quizzes.

**Correct:** The assignment was marked on the first day, the results released within a week, and posted at 12 noon. This will be done for all quizzes.

Writing Problems within Saudi Context

Previous researches have been conducted on the Saudi students, who studied English as a major subject, investigating writing difficulties encountered by them. Among them, some researchers concluded writing strategies, while others analyzed the common errors committed by learners.

A study was carried out by Al-Khairi (2013) concluded that students showed some weakness in writing skills, mainly at the sentence level. This study was conducted to investigate problems that Saudi EFL learners at Al-Taif University faced. The study collected the point of view Al-Taif University population (both instructors/faculty members and students). To collect his data Al-Khairi (2013) used interviews and questionnaires. His recommendations offered suggestions including diagnosis of the students' writing issues from the beginning of their university study.

Within the same Saudi context (Tabuk University), another study was done by Bani Younes and Albalawi (2015) in which they discussed common problems that faced female students who were studying in English Language and Translation Department. Collected data was achieved through the use of writing documents and questionnaires. The findings indicated that the issues found fell under three categories. The first was grammatical errors (specifically tenses, prepositions, syntax, subject-verb agreement), and how to utilize articles in sentence structure. The second category is punctuation issues whereby they were not applied where needed, misused, or added where they are not required. The third category was spelling in terms of omission, substitution, disordering, addition, unrecognizable words, and segmentation.

A study conducted by Mohammad and Hazarika (2016) focused on probing the difficulties that students at Najran University had in skills of writing. The collected data was achieved using questionnaires and analyzing writing examples of the participants. It performed an analysis of 50 students in the preparatory year program. The main focus was on capitalization, punctuation, use of language, grammar and spelling. The study revealed that students mostly memorized the answer paragraphs during exams instead of reading and applied what they had learned as they answered each question. The remedial measures offered by the study included the use of learner-centered teaching techniques, including the demand of students to write more descriptive paragraphs, especially on the topics they preferred.

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

**Methods**

This study was conducted using descriptive statistics and utilizing the frequency technique to determine the common challenges of writing short sentences encountered by the first-year English-major undergraduate students. The study began at the second term of the academic year 2021. A 25-item questionnaire was used to collect data from students. Concurrently, from a qualitative research point of view, interviews were conducted with 30 instructors within the English language departments at Al-Baha University to determine the awareness of the issues faced by students in the construction of short sentences. The instruments (questionnaire and interviews) were dispatched to the participants 15 days before the end of the second term to ensure that students learnt and acquired all writing skills practice that assist to write well-structured sentences. The feedback of the participants was received by the end of the second term of the academic year 2021.

It is worth mentioning that there are five different English departments in Al-Baha University, as the University comprises five branches located in five different localities.

**Participants**

The population includes all first-year English-major undergraduate students in Al-Baha University colleges. For more generalization of the results, the probability (random) sampling method was used. The study sample was consisted of 30 instructors from the English language departments and 122 first-year English-major undergraduate students from the English language departments at Al-Baha University campuses. Among them, 62 were females (%50.8), whereas 60 were males (%49.2). All students were chosen from the first-year English-major undergraduate students from the English language departments.

| Table 1. Distribution of study sample (Students) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Total | percent |
| First-Year Students | | |
| Male | 60 | 49.2 |
| Female | 62 | 50.8 |
| Total | 122 | 100% |

| Table 2. Distribution of study sample (Instructors) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Total | percent |
| English Department Instructors | | |
| Male | 15 | 50% |
| Female | 15 | 50% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

**Research Instruments**

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

The questions were tailored to determine the challenges that the first-year English-major students face in constructing short sentences. A five-Likert scale was used to assess the degree of agreement; in percentage, students had with each question posed from ‘strongly agree,’ ‘agree,’ ‘disagree,’ ‘Strongly disagree,’ with neutral choice coded ‘Not sure.’

Table 3. Correlation between learning practices and student attitudes towards structuring short sentences

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table three above shows that the correlation coefficient between learning habits and sentence structure is negative and not significant. This means that the correlation is not statistically valid. It also demonstrates that the students’ attitudes and success in learning the construction of short sentence structure through literature are highly correlated. Their language proficiency is unsatisfactory, indicating that they have not demonstrated exceptional results.

Analysis and Findings
Findings from the student questionnaire
The explanatory variables for this can be emphasized by the reality that while students have been educated on constructing sentence structure via literature, they cannot create their forms or any technique for grasping them. Furthermore, instructors should not allow students to research with their peer groups to generate ideas, improving their ability to produce grammatically correct structures. Above all, the program does not encourage the driving factors associated with creating sentence structures, such as evaluation, reasoning, discovery, creativity, awareness, and comprehensive systems.

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

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

An Independent-Samples T-Test was used to investigate the correlation between difficulties in short sentence structure and university education level and the first-year students. The first independent-samples T analysis was conducted on the mean score of the sentence structure and the first-year students’ attitudes to measure the hypotheses between university education levels and their challenges in learning sentence structure via literary works. According to Table four, the gap in mean scores between the first-year students is very high, i.e., 53.15. It demonstrates that the first-year students do not outperform the other students in different levels of university education in learning short sentence structure courses.
Table four indicates that the mean score and standard deviation vary so little depending on the parameters and learners in the English department. This means that this research demonstrates no association regarding student gender and their understanding of short sentence structure through literary works. The mean score between variables and level of university education differs by 17.62 points.

There was a disagreement about various questions. Considering that most students learn English as a foreign language (EFL), about 69.6 percent agreed that there was no substantial vocabulary that could help them writing short sentences. About 74.5 percent of the students disagreed that there are no sufficient homework exercises for the first-year students majoring in English. Meanwhile, 46.7 percent of the students disagreed that instructors do not encourage the first-year English-major students to practice written English effectively and constantly. Moreover, it appears that 42.6 percent of the students disagreed that students who major in English are not motivated to practice written English to improve the construction of short sentences. Concurrently, 37.7 percent of the students majoring in English are not provided with appropriate curricula for learning short sentence construction. Lastly, 41.9 percent of the first-year students majoring in English are good in written English, writing skills, and sentence construction (see Appendix A).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. E.M.</th>
<th>TValue</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>E Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Year Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (N=60)</td>
<td>41.13</td>
<td>29.21</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>-5.832</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (N=62)</td>
<td>53.15</td>
<td>31.25</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Year (N=122)</td>
<td>64.38</td>
<td>46.13</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four indicates that female students' mean score (53.15) is substantially higher than that of male students (41.13). The explanation for this disparity is self-evident: female students take their responsibilities more seriously than male students. Table five shows a slight gap in the mean score of the first-year students and other learners at different university levels of education. The mean achievement test score for all first-year English students is 64.38. The variation in the t-value between the achievement test and the degree of university education is shown in Table five.

Students were not aware of how to answer specific questions, such as English-major students were not obtaining the necessary writing techniques for constructing the short sentences in the classrooms, which accounted for 20.5 percent of the students, as well as 20.5 percent of students were unsure if the English department focuses more on spoken English but not written. Additionally, 23.8 percent of the students were unsure whether instructors always express their satisfaction with the first-year students' standard in writing short sentences and writing skills. While 18.9 percent of the students were unsure if there are no suitable lessons for teaching and writing skills for students majoring in English (see Appendix A).
About 86.9 percent of the students agreed that there is a need for improvement on how students majoring in English are taught accuracy in the basics of writing skills. This was the most challenging issue contributing to students having a problem constructing short sentence parts, including grammar concepts (see Appendix A).

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

Findings from the interviews

The second instrument in this study was the interview. Consistent with the same results concluded from the questionnaire (see Appendix A), the instructors agreed that the first-year English department students were below average in writing skills. Instructors were advised to be aware of this situation and help solve these common mistakes. They revealed that students had no general understanding of a sentence and were unaware of what a complete sentence is. They added that students are still unable to identify the components of a sentence. Sometimes they confuse sentences in English and Arabic, mainly when they write sentences without verbs. They mentioned that students seem to apply the ‘negative transfer’ concepts of SLA using the sentence structure in Arabic, which allows a nominal sentence, into English. Students have some difficulties in English vocabulary, so they should increase their language by practicing them while writing English. Moreover, they advised that students should pay attention to the tense, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling.

Considering students confusion about the sentence structure, instructors believed that the students were not able to write good conjunctions and punctuation marks. Many students use a lot of ‘and’ so that they also seem to depend on the Arabic grammatical rules. Looking back at the questionnaire analysis (item 22), the students also expressed frequent errors or mistakes of punctuation and conjunctions, especially adversative, temporal, and causal conjunctions. They are more familiar with additive conjunctions (and, but). Even though they know how to use these two critical sub-skills of writing, many students cannot apply conjunctions and punctuation marks when writing short sentences in a paragraph. Another issue highlighted is that to a certain extent students have relevant information about using active voice, but have many difficulties in applying the passive voice. Passive voice is generally avoided by most students when writing sentences. The students also had obstacles in using irregular verbs and nouns in sentence construction.

The first-year students use pronouns, but they confuse them, especially the objective and the possessive ones. All students have no difficulties using first-person pronouns, but many of them encounter challenges in writing possessive adjectives and reflexive pronouns. As observed, students showed weakness in the subject and object pronouns and using the types of pronouns by the first-year students. There is almost unanimity among participants that female students are better than male somewhat, in terms of vocabulary, diversity in the use of conjunctions, and
seriousness in developing English writing skills, and this is a strong prove as an evident in their written works compared with male students' ones. All these issues presented were used as the baseline results for a discussion on the right way to assist them in constructing correct short sentences.

According to instructors' responses, the following are common issues that students encounter when they construct short sentences:

- Categories in general, punctuations and capitalizations
- Using the correct auxiliary.
- Using quantifiers countable and uncountable nouns and adjectives with them like little, much, more, few, a lot of, less, many, etc.
- Comparative and superlative degrees
- Pronoun Disagreement.

Discussion

The above results showed the common challenges students face while constructing short sentences. The most challenging aspect for novice writers in English is a verb in the sentence. Students also find it challenging to understand the difference between ‘is’ and ‘are’ as main and helping verbs. For most of them, these verbs cannot be main verbs. The most difficult challenge can be concluded in tense, number, pronoun, preposition, capitalization, spelling, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement. This finding is in agreement with (Yemez and Dikilitaş, 2022). Students' other problems include the frequent application of the mother-tongue structure, lack of vocabulary knowledge, insufficient knowledge of grammar and weak in writing practice which are examples of the common writing challenges, the same difficulties were found in previous studies done by (Ahmed, 2010; Al-Seghayer, 2014).

Instructors assured the importance of sitting down and discussing students' mistakes to help them figure out where exactly they lack writing skills and highlight the differences between English and Arabic concerning sentence structure (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Bryson, 2020; Yemez & Dikilitaş, 2022). The most helpful strategy is error correction to improve their level efficiently and effectively. Generally, when teaching writing skills, instructors must avoid any complexity and try to help learners express their ideas in straightforward ways. So, it is better to apply every strategy that pays attention to more practice through copying, dictation, words/sentences re-ordering, sentence completion, and other available simple techniques and integrated method (Alhaisoni, et al. 2017).

Based on the circumstances, each person has a dominant learning style. Indeed, there are a maximum of eight types: aural learners, visual learners, verbal learners, and so on (Somji, 2018). Instructors should encourage students to give examples imitating the ones provided by their instructor, arrange the separated parts of the grammatically correct short sentence, and deconstruct the correct short sentence into its components (Tauguchi, 2006). Lastly, unexpectedly, the study found that female students scored higher than male students. The reason seems to be because of the ability of female students to handle any task more seriously than male students do (Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2015).

In a broad sense, the study discovered that almost in every English Language Departments, students had very low-level skill practice of English writing skills. Consistent with
findings concluded by other researchers on Saudi context, as in (Al-Khairy, 2013; Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2015), this appears to imply that both male and female students have little or no fundamental English language writing skills. As a result, this study strongly recommends that EFL instructors of the first-year students enrolled pay further emphasis on the development of writing skills. This would almost undoubtedly lead to the students trying to overcome any difficulties they may experience and would almost surely propel them towards their education at the English department later.

Interestingly, the instructors' responses to the interview and the students' responses to the questionnaire were identical to a large extent, in terms of difficulties of short sentence writing faced by the first-year EFL undergraduate students. Such outcomes seem to prove that students did not obtain sufficient writing skills practice, whether in pre-university level or after joining the English language departments at the University. Thus, more practice of writing short sentences would be beneficial to students in their later stages of the English language program.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, this study aims to identify the major obstacles in composing short sentences experienced by 1st-year English-major undergraduate students in the English language departments and to increase EFL instructors' awareness of students' challenges in writing well-structured sentences. Thus, after carefully studying the data, it was found that students' writing skills were below average (i.e., they were unable to identify the components of a sentence). Concurrently, female students in the English department were found to do better than male students, unexpectedly due to their self-evident (i.e., female students take their responsibilities more seriously than male students). Therefore, it is the instructors’ duty to highlight this situation and help them solve these common mistakes. Additionally, students showed a negative transfer of concepts of SLA using the sentence structure in Arabic besides their difficulties in English vocabulary. So, it is better to pay attention to English tenses, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling. Moreover, it is found that students were not able to write good conjunctions and punctuation marks. Besides students were found to be unable to differentiate between active and passive sentences and had difficulties in using irregular verbs and nouns in sentence construction. These difficulties can be attributed to the mother-tongue structure, lack of vocabulary knowledge, and insufficient understanding of grammar. Thus, this study highly supports the use of error correction strategy to improve the sentence writing level efficiently and effectively.

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## Appendix A

**Students Questionnaire with responses (percentages).**

Please choose the best describes your opinion about the following. Please, write 1 = *Strongly agree*; 2 = *agree*; 3 = *Not sure*; 4 = *Disagree*; or 5 = *Strongly disagree.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students majoring in English are not provided with appropriate curricula for learning short sentence construction in the first year.</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>In the first year, English-major students do not obtain the necessary writing techniques for the construction of the short sentences in the classrooms.</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In the first year, English-major students are not aware of what are the parts of a sentence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In the first year, English-major students have no adequate vocabulary helping the students in writing many short sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>There are no sufficient homework exercises are given to first-year students majoring in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In the first year, the English-major students are not given enough time to exercise writing in the classrooms.</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Instructors do not encourage the first-year English-major students to practice written English effectively and constantly.</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In the first year, Students-major in English do not have any motivation for practicing written English to improve the construction of short sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>In the first year, the English department focuses more on spoken English but not written.</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>In the first year, there are no sufficient lessons for teaching written English and writing skills for students majoring in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>In the first year in the English department, Instructors do not insist on checking and correcting sentence construction in the exercises and assignments.</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>There is a need for improvement on how students majoring in English are taught accuracy in the basics of writing skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Instructors focus on ensuring students' complete taught lessons, but not the necessity and importance of mastering sentence construction.</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Structured Interviews Questions

As you have been teaching writing courses in the English language department, you are kindly invited to participate in a research study titled "Challenges of Short Sentence Writing Encountered by First-Year Saudi EFL Undergraduate Students".

The purpose of this study is to specify and investigate common writing problems related to short sentence structure among first-year English students. The study also aims to increase instructors’ awareness of the challenges students face in writing well-structured sentences.

Your answers will be anonymous and will never be linked to you personally. The questions will take approximately 25 minutes to be answered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, English-major students are well taught and are aware of the basics of sentence construction.</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, students majoring in English are given enough units of teaching that offer lessons on sentence structure.</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, students majoring in English are good in written English, writing skills, and construction of a sentence.</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, instructors focus on discussing and correcting grammar and sentence construction mistakes with them.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are given more written feedback as well as written exercises to be able to write more effective short sentences.</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors always express their satisfaction with the first-year students' standard in writing short sentences and writing skills.</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, students-major in English have difficulty using irregular verbs in sentences construction correctly.</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, English majoring students have difficulty using irregular plural nouns in sentences construction correctly.</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, English majoring students have difficulty using conjunctions in sentences construction properly.</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, English majoring students have difficulty in constructing passive sentences.</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, students-major in English have difficulty in using punctuation marks such as comma (,), semi-colon (;), colon (:), apostrophe (’), etc.</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first year, students-major in English have difficulty identifying parts of speech in sentences such as adverb, adjective, verb, noun, preposition, etc.</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you very much in advance for your time and support.

- **Biographical Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Optional):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Rank:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underline/Circle which section have you been teaching?</td>
<td>(Boys' section – Girls' section or Both sections)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **The interview questions**. Please provide your point of view about the following:

How fluent are your first-year English department students in written English?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________  
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

Are the EFL students able to define or explain the meaning of a short sentence?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

To what extent are the EFL students able to identify the parts of a short sentence?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

To what extent are the EFL students able to construct a short sentence in correct written English?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

To what extent are first-year EFL students aware of the proper use of conjunctions and punctuation marks as well as their application in their short sentences?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

To what extent are first-year EFL students able to correctly identify and apply active and passive voices in short sentences?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

To what extent are first-year EFL students able to use pronouns accurately such as object, possessive, reflexive pronouns, and possessive adjectives and follow the necessary rules of using pronouns in their short sentences?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

What teaching method or strategy do you think is most preferable for teaching constructing grammatically correct short sentences?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

What common challenges do your EFL students face while constructing short sentences?
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________

Are there any significant differences between male and female students concerning difficulties in writing short sentences? If yes, please mention them in detail.
Answer:______________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

I would be very grateful if you could provide me with some short sentences from your students' work; preferably short sentences including some common mistakes. (Kindly, list a sample of your students' work below or alternatively email it to me).

Thank you for your valuable contribution